

## Mizoram to introduce monthly hindi-speaking day in schools to improve language skills

**Aizawl, Jan 28:** The Mizoram government has decided to introduce a Hindi-speaking day in all schools across the state as part of its efforts to improve students’ ability to speak and understand the language. The initiative will be implemented once every month and will apply to both government and private schools. Announcing the decision, School Education Minister Vanlalthansai said the programme will be carried out under the supervision of the state School Education Department. On the designated day, students and teachers will be encouraged to speak and converse only in Hindi during school hours.

Addressing a press conference, the minister said the main aim of the initiative is to improve spoken Hindi, especially among students from rural and remote areas. He pointed out that Mizoram, being a hilly state largely inhabited by the Mizo tribal community, has very limited exposure to Hindi in daily life. At present, Mizo and English are the official languages used for administration and education in the state. Vanlalthansai said many students from Mizoram face difficulties when they travel outside the state for higher studies, competitive examinations, or employment, where knowledge of Hindi is often necessary. Due to a

lack of regular practice, students find it hard to communicate, which sometimes affects their confidence and opportunities. The Hindi-speaking day, he said, is meant to address this gap in a simple and practical way. To support the initiative, the government plans to provide proper training to Hindi teachers so that they can help students speak the language more fluently. Special attention will also be given to students who have little or no knowledge of Hindi, ensuring they receive extra guidance and support. The minister said the government will soon issue a formal notification making the Hindi-speaking day man-



datory for all schools. The syllabus and learning materials for spoken Hindi will be prepared by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, keeping the focus on conversation rather than written exams. At the same time, the state government is also planning to introduce a home language day in all English-medium schools. This move is aimed at encouraging students to use and value their mother tongues and local languages.

Vanlalthansai expressed concern over the increasing use of English, even within homes and local communities, which he said is slowly pushing indigenous languages into the background. He said the government is committed to protecting and promoting local languages alongside learning national and global languages. The minister also announced that all teachers appointed under the state government will be required to learn at least five languages within five years of their recruitment. This requirement, he said, is in line with provisions under the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) and directions of the Supreme Court.

## CoTU withdraws shutdown, NPO follows with similar decision

**Imphal, Jan 28:** The Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) has withdrawn its 24-hour total shutdown along Asian Highway-2 (Imphal–Dimapur) and National Highway-37 (Imphal–Jiribam) in the larger interest of peace and inter-tribal harmony. The shutdown, which began at midnight on January 27, was called to protest the alleged failure of the Manipur government to arrest those involved in the Republic Day arson attack at K Songlung Village, Part-II. According to CoTU, the withdrawal followed internal deliberations and consultations with various stakeholders, as well as a joint declaration issued by the United Naga Council (UNC) and Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) at Kangpokpi on January 27. The declaration appealed for dialogue and constructive engagement between communities to prevent further escalation of tensions. CoTU said it unanimously decided to stand by the UNC–KIM peace initiative, describing it as a crucial step towards strengthening inter-community relations. The shutdown, originally scheduled to continue until midnight of January 28, was withdrawn with immediate effect. Earlier in the day, women volunteers were seen enforcing the in parts of Kangpokpi town and Gamgiphai, situation.

## Arunachal Home Minister calls for protection of indigenous Donyi-Polo faith at Nyedar Namlo’s 25th Anniversary

**Itanagar, Jan 28:** Arunachal Pradesh Home Minister Mama Natung has stressed the need to protect and strengthen the state’s indigenous Donyi-Polo faith, saying it is deeply connected to the cultural identity and traditional values of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. He was speaking on January 27 while attending the silver jubilee celebrations of Nyedar Namlo at Rono in Doimukh. The programme marked 25 years of Nyedar Namlo, an important religious and cultural institution rooted in the Donyi-Polo belief system. The minister attended the event as the chief guest. He

was joined by Topin Ete, MLA from Aalo West, who attended as the guest of honour. Nabam Vivek and Jike Tako were present as special invitees. Speaking to the gathering, Natung said that Donyi-Polo is not just a religion but a way of life that teaches people to live with honesty, peace, and respect for nature. He praised the followers and organisers of Nyedar Namlo for their continued efforts to keep the indigenous faith alive, especially at a time when traditional practices are facing challenges. He said such events help younger generations understand their roots and take pride in their heritage.

Nyedar Namlo has, over the years, worked as a centre for spiritual learning and moral guidance. It has also played a key role in promoting social harmony and unity among communities by encouraging ethical living and truthfulness. MLA Topin Ete, in his address, appreciated the organisers and devotees for successfully completing 25 years of service to society. He wished the Nyedar Namlo movement continued growth and said its role in preserving indigenous traditions is vital for Arunachal Pradesh. The celebration included a sacrificial prayer ritual at the Nyedar Namlo, cul-

• *Arunachal Pradesh’s Home Minister Mama Natung emphasized the importance of preserving the indigenous Donyi-Polo faith at the silver jubilee celebrations of Nyedar Namlo in Doimukh on January 27.*

tural performances by local artists, and the release of the Rup Anywng prayer song cassette. A Class VI textbook titled Nyubu Nyegam Yirko was also released during the programme. In addition, Rup Anywng Soju Nyvdar Namlo, mentor and founder president of RYPNN, was felicitated for his lifelong contribution to the faith.

## Congress looks to grassroots strength as Gogoi attacks ‘Politics of Fear’ at Bongaigaon convention

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** The Assam Congress has signalled a renewed push for mass mobilisation as its state president Gaurav Gogoi accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of running the state through fear and pressure rather than public support. Speaking at a Mandal Convention held at Abhayapuri in Bongaigaon district, Gogoi said the Congress was rebuilding itself from the ground up as people across Assam began to turn away from what he called an atmosphere of intimidation and control. Addressing a packed gathering of party workers and supporters, Gogoi alleged that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was clinging to power by misusing state institutions, particularly the police and the Home Department. He claimed that the BJP leadership no longer trusted the people and had instead chosen fear as its main political tool. “The BJP is not confident anymore. That is why it depends on fear, threats and pressure. The Congress believes in people, not in intimidation,” Gogoi said, adding that public participation at Congress programmes was steadily increasing without force or inducement. The convention was attended by sever-



al senior party leaders, including AICC observer Bandhu Tirkey, AICC secretary Prithviraj Sathe, Member of Parliament Rakibul Hussain, Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia, and former MP Abdul Khaleque. Several Congress MLAs and district-level leaders were also present. Gogoi said the strong turnout at Congress meetings across Upper, Central and Lower Assam showed growing dissatisfaction with the BJP government. He claimed that people were attending Congress programmes voluntarily, which he described as a clear sign of political change. According to him, the Congress was once again becoming a platform where people felt their concerns could be heard. Referring to the recent Lok Sabha elections,

Gogoi pointed to the BJP’s defeat in Jorhat as an important moment. He said that despite a high-profile campaign involving repeated visits by senior leaders and extensive use of money and power, the ruling party failed to secure the seat. “That result showed that people cannot be influenced forever. The same message will be repeated elsewhere,” he said. The APCC president also accused the BJP government of hiding its governance failures behind communal language. He alleged that illegal activities such as cow smuggling, coal trade and betel-nut syndicates had expanded during the present regime. While avoiding direct names, he questioned the ruling party’s claims of clean governance and moral authority. Gogoi further alleged that power and wealth were being concentrated in the hands of a few, weakening democratic institutions and public trust. He criticised government policies on education, employment and evictions, saying ordinary people were suffering while basic services continued to decline. “When schools are closed and liquor shops open, it shows the priorities of the government,” he said.

## 7,200 km of NH built in NE in last 11 years: Murmu

**Aizawl, Jan 28:** President Droupadi Murmu today said that more than 7,200 kilometres of National Highways have been built in the Northeastern region in the last 11 years.

This has made it easier to reach remote, hilly, tribal, and border areas, she said in her address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on the first day of Budget Session of Parliament.

“More than 80,000 crore rupees have been invested for the development of railways in the Northeastern region during the last 11 years. The capitals of Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Mizoram have now been connected through broad-gauge rail lines. This has opened new opportunities for economic progress, employment, and tourism industry in these areas,” she said.

Murmu made specific mention about Aizawl and New Delhi being connected by direct rail route.

“Last year, when the Rajdhani Express arrived for the first time at Aizawl railway station, the enthusiasm shown by the local people brought joy to the entire nation,” she said.

“Just a few days ago, a new generation of Vande Bharat trains has



been inducted. Introduction of Vande Bharat sleeper trains between Bengal and Assam is a new achievement in the progress of Railways in India,” the President stated.

During her address, she further said that this decade has also been a decade of initiatives for ensuring health facilities in the North East. The establishment of the State Cancer Institute in Itanagar and medical college in Sivasagar in Assam will help provide

treatment to crores of families.

Similarly, establishment of medical college in Sikkim’s Sichey and a hospital for women and children in Agartala will greatly enhance healthcare facilities, she said, adding that such efforts are creating a robust health infrastructure in the Northeastern region.

“Now, the Northeastern region is also integrating with the mainstream of development. Assam in the region is the land of great icons like Sriman-

ta Sankardev. Soon, a semiconductor chip manufactured in Assam will become a lifeline for electronic products worldwide. Unprecedented attention is also being given to improving connectivity in this region,” Murmu said.

“All citizens also witnessed that the events associated with the birth centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika were imbued with melodies and the spirit of national unity,” she added.

## Bhumi Adhikar Party Slams Assam CM Over Remarks on Evictions in Guwahati Hills

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** The Bhumi Adhikar Party (Land Rights Party) has strongly criticised recent remarks made by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to the media regarding eviction drives in the hills of Guwahati. Party leaders alleged that the Chief Minister’s statement — that eviction notices would be served to “Miyas” and not to indigenous Assamese hill residents — was an attempt to polarise voters and secure the support of indigenous hill communities ahead of elections.

Addressing a press conference at the party office in Sorusajai, party president Prabin Jyoti Kalita accused the Chief Minister of indulging in “divisive politics” over the issue of land pattas for landless families who have been living in various hill areas of Guwahati for generations.

“We have come to know through media reports that the Chief Minister is once again trying to win the votes of indigenous hill residents with false promises before the elections,” Kalita said.

The party questioned why, if eviction is not intended, land patta applications of indigenous hill dwellers have been rejected under the Basundhara 2.0 and 3.0 schemes.

Kalita pointed out that families living

for decades across 366 notified hill areas of Guwahati have seen their applications rejected on grounds such as landslide-prone (landslide) or non-convertible (NC) land classifications.

“If there is truly no plan to evict hill residents after the elections, then the government should immediately revoke the rejected applications and begin issuing land pattas before the polls,” Kalita demanded.

He further alleged that merely announcing before the media that Assamese residents would not be evicted until elections, while continuing to deny them legal land rights, was misleading the public.

The party accused the Chief Minister of attempting to divert attention by selectively targeting one community while keeping indigenous residents in uncertainty.

The Bhumi Adhikar Party demanded: Revocation of the Cabinet decision barring land pattas in landslide-prone areas, withdrawal of restrictions on granting pattas in NC (non-convertible) land reconsideration of areas in the plains that have allegedly been wrongly marked as landslide-prone.

Party vice-president Ramen Baruah and spokesperson Pradip Kalita were also present at the press conference.

## Pending clauses of Bodo Peace Accord to be taken up with Centre and Assam Government: Hagrama Mohilary

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) president and Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary on Tuesday said that the unfinished clauses of the Bodo Peace Accord would soon be taken up with both the Assam government and the Centre. He said the responsibility of fully carrying out the agreement lies with the state and central governments. Mohilary was speaking at a public programme held to mark the sixth anniversary of the Bodo Peace Accord. The event was organised by the BPF-led BTC at the BTC Legislative Assembly Auditorium at Bodofa Nwngwr in Kokrajhar. Political leaders, representatives of social organisations and members of the Bodo community attended the programme. The third Bodo Peace Accord, signed on January 27, 2020, was a tripartite agreement between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and Bodo organisations, including former militant groups. The agreement is seen as a major step that ended years of unrest in the Bodoland region and opened the way for peace and development.



Addressing the gathering, Mohilary said that while the anniversary was a day of remembrance and reflection, it was also a reminder that several promises made to the Bodo people are still pending. He said clauses related to greater financial and administrative powers for the BTC, expansion of the Bodoland Territorial Region, and constitutional protection have not yet been fully implemented. He also pointed to pending issues such as the rehabilitation of former cadres, release of certain individuals linked to the movement, and reforms in local governance bodies. Mohilary said he would raise these matters with the Assam government at the earliest and seek discussions with the Centre.

## BJP government focused on tribal welfare: Tripura CM

**Agartala, Jan 28:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on January 28 said that the BJP-led “double-engine” government is fully committed to the all-round development of the state’s tribal society, which he said had remained neglected for many years under previous administrations. Addressing a public meeting in Sabroom, the Chief Minister said democracy becomes meaningful only when common people are empowered and actively involved in governance. He stated that for decades, the concerns and needs of tribal communities were not given due importance, resulting in gaps in development and access to welfare benefits. Saha said the present government, under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party, is making con-



tinuous efforts to ensure inclusive growth with a special focus on tribal areas. He added that these efforts

are aimed at improving living standards, strengthening trust in governance, and ensuring equal opportunities for all sections of society. In a post shared on social media platform X, the Chief Minister said the government is working tirelessly for the holistic development of tribal communities.

He said these initiatives have helped build confidence among people and strengthened their faith in the development process. Saha also referred to the large turnout of tribal men and women at the BJP’s public meeting held at the Shyam Singh Higher Secondary School field in Sabroom. He said the strong participation reflected growing public support and trust in the government’s policies.

# Brown sugar worth Rs 1 crore seized One arrested

**Imphal, Jan 28:** The anti-narcotic task force of the Manipur Police, assisted by central security forces, arrested an alleged drug smuggler and recovered contraband drugs worth around Rs 1 crore in the regional market. One four-wheeler and a communication device were also seized during the operation conducted in Bishnupur district, officials reported on Wednesday. Based on intelligence inputs from multiple sources, the joint security teams were on high alert and intercepted a Maruti Swift four-wheeler bearing registration number MN-06-LX-0437 at the Nambol area under Nambol police station, Bishnupur district, on Tuesday.

During the operation, the driver of the vehicle, 54-year-old Md. Basir Khan from Kwakta Khuman Ward No. 4 in Bishnupur district, was arrested. From his possession, 1.029 kg of brown sugar heroin was seized. In addition, one mobile phone and



the four-wheeler, Maruti Swift with registration number MN-06-LX-0437, were recovered by the authorities. Meanwhile, the Manipur Police Department has launched a toll-free narcotics helpline to address complaints related to drug trafficking and smuggling in the state. The helpline, 1800-345-1934, is available 24/7 for citizens to report any drug-related activities. Authorities have urged everyone, including government employees, to report such incidents and cooperate fully with the police promptly.

# In the past eleven years, 7,200 km of NH have been constructed in the Northeast: Murmu

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** President Droupadi Murmu today said that more than 7,200 kilometres of National Highways have been built in the Northeastern region in the last 11 years. This has made it easier to reach remote, hilly, tribal, and border areas, she said in her address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on the first day of Budget Session of Parliament. “More than 80,000 crore rupees have been invested for the development of railways in the Northeastern region during the last 11 years. The capitals of Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Mizoram have now been connected through broad-gauge rail lines. This has opened new opportunities for economic progress, employment, and tourism industry in these areas,” she said. Murmu made specific mention about Aizawl and New Delhi being connected by direct rail route. “Last year, when the Rajdhani Express arrived for the first time at Aiza-



wl railway station, the enthusiasm shown by the local people brought joy to the entire nation,” she said. “Just a few days ago, a new generation of Vande Bharat trains has been inducted. Introduction of Vande Bharat sleeper trains between Bengal and Assam is a new achievement in the progress of Rail-

ways in India,” the President stated. During her address, she further said that this decade has also been a decade of initiatives for ensuring health facilities in the North East. The establishment of the State Cancer Institute in Itanagar and medical college in Sivassagar in Assam will help provide

treatment to crores of families. Similarly, establishment of medical college in Sikkim’s Sichey and a hospital for women and children in Agartala will greatly enhance healthcare facilities, she said, adding that such efforts are creating a robust health infrastructure in the Northeastern region. “Now, the Northeastern region is also integrating with the mainstream of development. Assam in the region is the land of great icons like Srimanta Sankardev. Soon, a semiconductor chip manufactured in Assam will become a lifeline for electronic products worldwide. Unprecedented attention is also being given to improving connectivity in this region,” Murmu said. “All citizens also witnessed that the events associated with the birth centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika were imbued with melodies and the spirit of national unity,” she added.

# Indian Army showcases powerful weapons at Know Your Army Campaign

**Imphal, Jan 28:** Indian Army showcases modern weapons and defence capabilities during the “Know Your Army” campaign in Arunachal Pradesh, inspiring youth, promoting patriotism, and highlighting career opportunities in the Armed Forces across Northeast India.

The Indian Army has intensified its outreach initiatives across the north-eastern border states by showcasing its advanced weapons systems and operational capabilities under the ongoing “Know Your Army” campaign, reaffirming its readiness, technological strength, and unwavering commitment to national security.

As part of this initiative, the Spearhead Division of the Spear Corps organised a vibrant awareness and engagement programme for school students at Likabali in Arunachal Pradesh. The campaign was designed to foster patriotism, build awareness about the Armed Forces, and inspire young citizens to consider a future career in defence services. Defence spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Mahendra Rawat said the event aimed to bridge the gap between the Army and the youth by offering them first-hand exposure to the organisation’s ethos, discipline, and professional excellence. He emphasised that such outreach programmes play a crucial role in shaping informed, motivated, and responsible citizens, especially in strategically important border regions.

The campaign featured motivational interactions with serving soldiers, who shared real-life experiences of military service, leadership under pressure, and the spirit of sacrifice required to protect the nation. These sessions offered students a rare opportunity to hear directly from personnel who serve in challenging terrains and high-risk environments.

Students were also provided with detailed briefings on multiple entry pathways into the



Indian Armed Forces, including the National Defence Academy (NDA), Technical Entry Scheme (TES), Indian Military Academy (IMA), Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, Short Service Commission, and other recruitment opportunities. Officials explained eligibility criteria, preparation strategies, and long-term career growth, enabling students to better understand the structured and rewarding nature of defence careers. Enhancing the immersive experience, participants visited an Army museum and observed a hands-on display of modern military equipment, vehicles, and gear. The exhibition highlighted the Army’s evolving technological capabilities and its emphasis on modernisation to address contemporary security challenges. Students were encouraged to interact freely

with soldiers, ask questions, and gain insight into daily life in uniform, from training routines to operational responsibilities.

Lieutenant Colonel Rawat noted that the interactive nature of the programme helped ignite curiosity, discipline, and a deep sense of national pride among the participants.

Many students reportedly expressed enthusiasm about serving the country, reflecting the campaign’s success in inspiring the next generation. The Indian Army continues to underline its commitment to nation-building beyond battlefield responsibilities by engaging directly with young citizens. Through such initiatives, the Army seeks to nurture leadership values, social responsibility, and awareness of national security among the youth.

# CM Rejects Roman Script Demand for Kokborok

**Agartala, Jan 28:** In a politically sensitive move ahead of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has firmly rejected the demand raised by the Tipra Motha Party (TMP) to introduce the Roman script for the Kokborok language. Kokborok is the mother tongue of nine out of the 19 indigenous tribal communities living in the northeastern state. Addressing a large gathering of tribal people at Jolaibari in South Tripura on Tuesday, the Chief Minister made it clear that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government does not support the adoption of what he described as a “foreign script” for the indigenous language. His remarks are being seen as a significant political statement, especially as electoral activity intensifies in tribal-dominated regions. Saha emphasized that the issue of script selection should be resolved through consensus among tribal intellectuals, scholars, and linguistic experts, rather than through political pressure. However, he categorically ruled out the



Roman script as an option, warning that its adoption could have long-term cultural consequences. “If the Roman script is adopted for Kokborok, the younger generation of the tribal community may gradually forget their traditions, customs, and cultural roots,” the Chief Minister said. He argued that language is deeply connected to identity and heritage, and any change should strengthen, not dilute, indigenous culture. Drawing a comparison with other tribal communities, Saha noted that the Chakma community has

successfully developed and preserved its own script. He questioned why Kokborok-speaking communities should lag behind in creating or standardizing a script that reflects their indigenous identity. The Chief Minister also accused certain groups of creating confusion among tribal youth by repeatedly raising the Roman script demand. According to him, such debates risk diverting attention from more pressing issues such as education, employment, and economic development in tribal areas.

# The Climate Crisis in Tripura: The Need for Immediate Reevaluation of Disaster Management

**Agartala, Jan 28:** In 2024, heavy floods submerged large parts of Tripura, disrupting lives and livelihoods, affecting critical infrastructure, and bringing life to a standstill in several parts of the state. Media reports suggested that the floods claimed 32 lives and displaced close to 1.5 lakh people. Barely had the floodwaters receded when the state was gripped by an unrelenting heatwave, pushing summer temperatures to record highs. This was repeated in June 2025, when flash floods affected more than 700 houses while displacing over 11,000 people to relief camps. West Tripura and Unakoti districts were the most affected after two days of intense rain. In summer, days grew hotter and more unbearable. Temperatures rose well beyond seasonal norms by as much as 5 to 6 degrees Celsius, pushing vulnerable populations to the brink. Outdoor workers, schoolchildren, and the elderly were especially at risk. Health systems, already strained, struggled to respond to cases of heatstroke, dehydration, and water scarcity. According to a study by IPE Global and ESRI India (2024), Tripura is now among India’s top five emerging heatwave hotspots, based on rising temperature trends and increasing exposure of vulnerable communities. Taken together, these trends suggest that weather extremes in Tripura are no longer sporadic events but recurring climatic risks. For effective management of natural calamities, Tripura needs to integrate practices emphasising prevention and mitigation of climate-related disasters and develop mechanisms for providing instant relief and rehabilitation initiatives to reduce vulnerability. The recently revised Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2025 provides a timely opportunity for this. The DMA 2025 mandates a decentralised approach to disaster preparedness, meaning that planning, risk assessment, and response protocols are no longer the sole responsibility of state-level authorities but can also be developed at the district, municipal, and village levels.

This rapid climatic shift is already affecting lives and livelihoods across Tripura, with floods and erratic monsoons damaging agriculture, heatwaves cutting working hours for informal workers and farmers, and environmental stress



deepening hardship in hilly areas, sometimes triggering out-migration. Beyond individual distress, there is a wider institutional concern. Much of Tripura’s public infrastructure is vulnerable to climate risks, with failures of critical systems such as power, communication, and essential services during heavy rain and floods repeatedly slowing recovery and adding to the strain on public finances. The fiscal implications of this shift are evident in the state’s rising dependence on disaster response funds. Allocations under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) have increased steadily over the past six years. The table below illustrates SDRF allocations, disbursements, and additional assistance mobilised through advance releases and the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF). The increasing amount of central support in recent years points to the rising frequency and severity of disasters, as well as the limitations of routine budgetary provisioning in meeting such shocks. While

these transfers have been critical in enabling immediate relief, they also reveal a deeper structural issue. India’s disaster financing framework remains largely reactive, relying on post-event assessments and public expenditure after losses have already occurred.

Moreover, the current model suffers from other challenges. Delays in the disbursement of funds owing to bureaucratic hurdles in assessment and estimation of losses in post-disaster situations, political disputes arising from mismatches between assessed losses and approved funds, and disparities in aid distribution are only a few of the several challenges in the existing framework. As climate-induced disasters become more frequent, the present approach risks placing sustained strain on public finances and diverting resources from planned development. For Tripura, continued reliance on emergency fiscal support is neither efficient nor resilient in the long term.

# Pothole-ridden SH-43 cripples daily commute

**Agartala, Jan 28:** Potholes and an uneven surface have severely disrupted daily movement along State Highway-43 connecting Narayanpur, Bihpuria and Laluk in Lakhimpur district, forcing commuters and vehicle operators to grapple with unsafe travel conditions.

The 25-km stretch of SH-43 from Narayanpur to Laluk has deteriorated sharply, posing serious risks especially for e-rickshaws and small transport vehicles. Locals say the road, the only major artery linking three key centres of the district, has become almost unusable between Narayanpur and Bihpuria. The highway connects important institutions such as Madhabdev University, Lakhimpur District Civil Hospital and Bihpuria College. However, massive potholes and craters dot nearly the entire stretch, leading to frequent breakdowns and accidents.

An e-rickshaw driver said the damaged surface has caused repeated mechanical failures to his vehicle and warned that the situation could worsen during the monsoon, with waterlogging likely to flood the deep craters. He expressed dissatisfaction over what he termed continued apathy by the concerned departments. A local resident echoed similar concerns, stating that government claims of development have not translated into ground reality, as thousands of commuters continue to suffer daily due to the deplorable condition of the highway.

Meanwhile, it has been learnt that the Assam Public Works Department had issued a tender for improvement and upgradation of State Highway-43 under the Asom Mala 3.0 programme.

The tender (Reference No. CE/DEV/TB/116/2025-26/01 dated July 29, 2025) covers the stretch from Km 0.00 to Km 25.05 at an estimated cost of Rs 27.46 crore, with a stipulated completion period of 540 days. Asom Mala 3.0 is a flagship infrastructure initiative aimed at strengthening Assam’s road network by constructing 883 km of high-speed corridors and 36 new bridges across 34 districts at a total cost of Rs 3,217 crore. The programme, approved by the Assam Cabinet on November 13, seeks to enhance connectivity, reduce travel time and boost economic growth across the state.

# UNDP representative calls on Mizoram CM



**Aizawl, Jan 28:** Angela Lusigi, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in India called on Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthumhama at his office in Aizawl on Tuesday.

The Chief Minister expressed his appreciation for UNDP’s various initiatives in Mizoram and encouraged the organisation to further expand its engagement in the State.

Welcoming Lusigi on her visit to Mizoram, the Chief Minister thanked UNDP for its continued support and contributions. He highlighted that three districts of Mizoram have featured among the top performers in the latest NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Index Report, and noted that Mizoram is known as a peaceful state with a low corruption rate. He also shared the State Govern-

ment’s vision of enabling Mizoram to contribute one per cent to India’s GDP by 2047 and requested UNDP to scale up and strengthen its initiatives in Mizoram to help realise this vision.

Angela Lusigi remarked that she found Mizoram to be a pleasant place and acknowledged the notable progress the State has made in recent years. She also outlined UNDP’s initiatives and priority areas to the Chief Minister and enquired about the State Government’s key priority sectors.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by TBC Lalvenchhunga, Adviser to the Chief Minister; Vanlaldina Fanai, Commissioner & Secretary to the Chief Minister; Lalmalsawma Pachuau, Secretary, Planning Department; and other officials.

# Nagaland wildfire breaks out in picturesque Dzukou Valley, forcing urgent evacuation of more than 30 trekkers to ensure safety

**Kohima, Jan 28:** A wildfire broke out in the southern part of Dzukou Valley in Kohima district of Nagaland, prompting the evacuation of more than 30 trekkers, officials said on Wednesday. According to the Kohima District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the fire is believed to have started on Monday, though it was reported to authorities on Tuesday. The cause and origin of the blaze are yet to be ascertained. The fire spread across parts of the high-altitude valley, raising concerns for trekkers and local volunteers operating in the area.

The district administration, along with the Southern Angami Youth Organisation (SAYO), launched containment and rescue operations to prevent the fire

from spreading further. Kohima Deputy Commissioner B Henok Buchem constituted a reconnaissance and rescue team and stated that additional personnel and resources would be deployed if required. An emergency meeting of the DDMA was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon to assess the situation and plan further action.

SAYO president Zasitsolie Beio said the organisation was alerted to the fire on Monday after receiving videos and photographs from volunteers in the valley. The immediate priority was the safe evacuation of trekkers stranded in the affected areas. As a precautionary measure, all trekking activities from the Jakhama and Viswema entry points

have been suspended until further notice. The incident comes weeks after a major wildfire in the Khonoma–Dzukou Valley area last December, which required a coordinated response from multiple agencies to bring the situation under control. A massive wildfire broke out in the picturesque Dzukou Valley of Nagaland, prompting the urgent evacuation of more than 30 trekkers who were stranded in the area. The blaze, which started on the slopes of the valley, quickly spread due to dry vegetation and strong winds, raising concerns about damage to the fragile ecosystem. Authorities, including the Nagaland State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and forest officials, rushed to the site to

contain the fire and ensure the safety of visitors. Trekkers, many of whom had come from different parts of the country to explore the valley’s famed natural beauty, were escorted to safety without any reported injuries.

The Dzukou Valley, located on the Nagaland-Manipur border, is renowned for its rolling meadows and seasonal flowers, making it a popular trekking destination. However, the region has witnessed recurring wildfires in recent years, often attributed to human negligence and climatic changes. Officials have appealed to the public to avoid activities that could trigger fires and assured that measures are being taken to restore the valley.

# Assam RGU to host BCI national inter-university moot court competition from Jan 29

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) chief and Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member (CEM) Hagrama Mohilary on Tuesday said the pending clauses of the historic Bodo Peace Accord would soon be taken up with both the Assam government and the Centre.

The Bodo Peace Accord—a tripartite agreement signed on January 27, 2020, between the Government of India, the

Government of Assam, and Bodo organisations, including all factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) — had marked the end of decades-long insurgency in Assam, sparking hopes for lasting peace in the region.

Addressing a programme on 6th Bodo Peace Accord Day, Mohilary underlined that the onus lay on both the Centre and the Assam government to implement all clauses of the Accord. The Accord’s sixth

anniversary was observed with day-long programmes organised by the Bodoland People’s Front-led BTC at the BTC Legislative Assembly Auditorium, Bodo-fa Nwgrw, in Kokrajhar in the presence of political leaders, civil society representatives and citizens.

The BTC chief pointed out that several key provisions of the Accord are yet to be implemented. These include enhanced financial and ad-

ministrative autonomy for the BTC through the proposed 125th Constitutional Amendment, granting ST (Hills) status to Bodo-Kachari communities in Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts, and the territorial expansion of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) by inclusion of additional villages, complete rehabilitation of former NDFB cadres and the release of some individuals associated with the armed movement, and the

restructuring of the council, municipality, and village-level bodies. Mohilary said the sixth anniversary of the Accord served as a reminder of the commitments made to the Bodo people. “While we are celebrating the 6th Bodo Peace Accord Day, it must be remembered that it is the responsibility of the state and central governments to fulfil the remaining clauses of the agreement signed with ABSU, NDFB and UPPO,” he said.

# Wildfire in Dzukou Valley forces evacuation of trekkers, trekking suspended in Kohima district

**Kohima, Jan 28:** A wildfire that broke out in the southern stretch of Dzukou Valley has led to the evacuation of more than 30 trekkers and prompted authorities to suspend all trekking activities in the area. The incident occurred in Nagaland’s Kohima district, raising concerns over safety and the risk of the fire spreading further. Officials said the trekkers were stranded in the high-altitude valley after the fire spread across parts of the grassland. All of them were later evacuated safely. Soon after the incident came to light, containment operations were launched jointly by the district administration and the Southern Angami Youth Organisation (SAYO) to control the blaze and prevent it from moving into nearby areas. According to the Kohima District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the wildfire is believed to have started on Monday. However, officials were formally alerted only on Tuesday after reports and visuals from the area began circulating. The exact cause of the fire and its point of origin are still not known. Deputy Commissioner B Henok Buchem said a team has been constituted for reconnaissance and rescue operations. He said all available resources are being mobilised to stop the fire from spreading further and added that additional manpower would be deployed if the situation demands. The focus, he said, is on safety and quick containment. A DDMA official said an emergency meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday afternoon to assess the situation and decide on the next course of action. The meeting is expected to review ground reports and plan further containment measures. SAYO president Zasitsolie Beio said the organisation was alerted on Monday afternoon after volunteers shared videos and photographs from the affected area. He said the first priority was to evacuate trekkers and put precautionary measures in place to avoid any loss of life. Following the incident, trekking has been temporarily suspended from both the Jakhama and Viswema entry points to Dzukou Valley. Authorities have advised people to stay away until the situation returns to normal.

# Congress Councillor joins NPF in Jalukie town, cites development and good governance

**Kohima, Jan 28:** In a significant political development in Nagaland, Namdatbou, the lone Congress councillor of Jalukie Town Council, formally joined the Naga People’s Front (NPF) on January 27. The joining took place at Jalukie Town in Peren district. According to a press release, Namdatbou joined the NPF along with all Congress party representatives from Ward No. 3 of Jalukie Town Council. The programme was held in the presence of Jalukie Town Council chairman Hadi, NPF 7 Peren Assembly Constituency president Kurangbe, and INC Jalukie Town Ward No. 3 unit president Willinghaibo. Several senior leaders and party workers of the NPF were also present during the event. The press release stated that Namdatbou and the Congress representatives from Ward No. 3 took a unanimous decision to join the NPF in support of the party’s leadership. The move, the release said, was made with the objective of strengthening the NPF under the leadership of Deputy Chief Minister T. R. Zeliang and Jalukie Town Council chairman Hadi. Speaking on the occasion, Namdatbou said that



his decision to leave the Congress and join the NPF was taken in the interest of development and good governance. He said he was impressed by the leadership and vision of T. R. Zeliang and believed that the NPF provides a stronger platform to work for the welfare of the people.

The councillor also expressed confidence in the leadership of Nagaland Chief Minister and NPF president Neiphiu Rio. He pledged to work sincerely for the growth and progress of Jalukie Town and to contribute positively to the party’s activities at the grassroots level.

# Mizoram MP seeks budget support for Sairang–Myanmar railway project

**Aizawl, Jan 28:** Mizoram’s lone Rajya Sabha member K Vanlalvena has urged the Union government to allocate funds for a proposed railway line from Sairang, near Aizawl, to the India–Myanmar border in the 2026–27 Union Budget. The appeal was made on January 27 during a meeting of floor leaders of all parties ahead of the Budget Session of Parliament. According to an official statement, Vanlalvena said that a preliminary survey for the rail project, which aims to connect Sairang with the southern tip of Mizoram and onward to Myanmar, has already been completed. He requested the Centre to



move the project forward by providing adequate financial support in the upcoming budget. The MP said the railway corridor would play an important role in improving connectivity within Mizoram, a

state with difficult terrain and limited transport options. He added that the proposed link would also have wider significance by strengthening India’s engagement with South-east Asian countries through

cross-border connectivity. Apart from the rail project, Vanlalvena raised concerns about rising traffic congestion on the Aizawl–Sairang road. He called for the road to be widened into four lanes and sought budgetary allocation for the same. He said traffic along this stretch has increased sharply after the opening of the Bairabi–Sairang railway line. The Sairang railway station was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September last year. The station is located on the route leading to Lengpui airport, making the Aizawl–Sairang road a key transport corridor.

# Cara workshop for NE on rehab of children with special needs

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), as part of its on-going efforts to strengthen India’s adoption and child protection ecosystem, is organising its second Regional Consultative Workshop in Guwahati on January 30.

The theme of the workshop is in line with CARA’s Adoption Awareness Campaign: “Promoting Non-Institutionalised Rehabilitation of Children with Special Needs (Divyaang Children)”.

The workshop is being organised to advance CARA’s commitment towards ensuring that children with special needs are provided family-based care and are not confined to long-term institutionalisation.

The initiative aligns with the mandate of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (as amended in 2022), which prioritises the best interests of the child through adoption and other non-institutional care mechanisms.

The consultation will bring together key stakeholders including State Adoption Resource Agencies (SARAs), Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs), Child Care Institutions (CCIs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), healthcare professionals, and child protection practitioners from States of North-Eastern Zone.

The participating states are – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland,

Mizoram and Tripura.

The programme will include thematic sessions covering aspects such as: State-wise status and best practices in adoption of children with special needs; sharing of success stories and evidence-based interventions; group discussions to develop actionable recommendations and medical, legal, financial, and grievance-related challenges.

A special film showcasing a successful adoption of children with special needs will also be

screened to highlight the transformative impact of family-based care.

Meanwhile, the deliberations will focus on identifying gaps, strengthening inter-departmental coordination, and formulating policy-level recommendations to promote adoption and rehabilitation of Divyaang children.

The workshop is expected to contribute significantly towards shaping a more inclusive, responsive, and child-centric adoption framework in the country.

# NRL capacity expansion to be completed by year end: Chairman



**Numaligarh, Jan 28:** Speaking at the India Energy Week 2026 in Goa, Dr Ranjit Rath, Chairman of Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL), said the capacity expansion of the refinery will be completed by the end of this year.

Dr Rath, who is also the Chairman & Managing Director of Oil India Limited, said that after the capacity expansion from current 3 million tonnes to 9 million tonnes per annum is completed, for the first time NRL will start processing imported crude oil.

NRL, a subsidiary of Oil India, currently uses mainly domestic crude as feedstock for making fuels like petrol and diesel.

“First crude-in happened on December 31 and is on track for the staged completion of the expansion by the year end,” he said.

Dr Rath also shared insights during his Energy Talk on “India’s Upstream Growth Potential: The Role of Policy, Collaboration and Technology in Expediting Frontier Exploration.”

He highlighted India’s vast untapped upstream potential and underscored how progressive pol-

icies, strategic collaborations, and cutting-edge technology are key to accelerating frontier exploration. He spoke about Oil India’s expanding footprint from onshore basins to challenging offshore frontiers and how the company is actively pursuing exploration in offshore seas with a long-term, confident outlook.

Calling upon investors to invest in India’s energy sector, he emphasised the country’s enabling policy environment and the immense opportunities emerging across frontier and deepwater plays.

Emphasising partnerships as a growth multiplier, he reiterated Oil India’s belief in collaborative models that bring together global expertise, shared risks, and shared rewards.

“We are risk takers,” he said, calling upon industry partners to collaborate with Oil India, a company that is ready to take on challenges and push boundaries in pursuit of new discoveries.

Ending on an optimistic note, Dr Rath expressed a positive outlook for new discoveries in the near future, reaffirming Oil India’s role as a proactive enabler of India’s energy security journey.

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India-Au ECTA

All Indian exports will receive duty-free access in the Australian market from today under the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), marking a significant milestone in the bilateral trade relationship between the two countries and reflecting a decade-long effort to deepen economic engagement, expand market access, and promote mutually beneficial trade flows, as under the terms of the agreement, 100 percent of Indian tariff lines will now enjoy duty-free access to Australia, thereby benefitting a wide spectrum of sectors including gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, furniture, food products, engineering goods, medical devices, and automobiles, which together constitute a substantial portion of India’s export basket and have historically faced tariffs and other trade barriers that limited their competitiveness in foreign markets, while India, in turn, has agreed to offer preferential access on over 70 percent of tariff lines to Australia, mainly covering raw materials and intermediates such as coal, mineral ores, and wine, reflecting a calibrated approach aimed at balancing domestic industrial interests with strategic trade partnerships, and Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had announced this development on the third anniversary of the ECTA on December 29 last year, describing it as a transformative step that will strengthen trade, promote investment, and create opportunities for small and medium enterprises, while enhancing supply chain integration and technological collaboration between the two countries, with officials noting that the agreement is expected to significantly boost India’s exports to Australia by reducing tariff burdens, improving market predictability, and providing Indian businesses with a competitive edge in key sectors where India has global competence, such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, automotive components, and engineering goods, thereby enabling Indian companies to expand their presence in a market known for high standards and stringent regulatory requirements, while also encouraging Australian businesses to participate more actively in India’s growing economy, which continues to demonstrate resilience, market potential, and a favourable investment climate, and trade analysts have highlighted that the duty-free access will enhance India’s strategic export orientation, diversify its trade portfolio, and strengthen the country’s position in the Asia-Pacific region, while providing new avenues for trade in high-value goods, raw materials, and intermediate products, with the agreement also encompassing provisions to facilitate trade through reduced non-tariff barriers, streamlined customs procedures, and enhanced regulatory cooperation, thereby ensuring that goods flow smoothly across borders and that exporters and importers benefit from predictable, transparent and efficient processes, while the ECTA is expected to promote broader economic collaboration beyond trade, including technology sharing, skill development, joint ventures, innovation, and investment in sectors such as renewable energy, infrastructure, and digital services, thereby creating a multi-dimensional partnership between India and Australia, as the Commerce Ministry has emphasised that sectors such as gems and jewellery and textiles, which employ millions of workers across India, will particularly benefit from expanded market access, with reduced duties improving profit margins, stimulating production, creating jobs, and fostering sustainable economic growth in both urban and rural regions, while sectors like medical devices and automobiles are expected to benefit from improved competitiveness and enhanced export volumes, as India continues to position itself as a reliable supplier in global value chains, and officials have pointed out that the preferential treatment for Australian exports to India, covering raw materials and intermediates, is carefully designed to support India’s industrial ecosystem, ensure availability of essential inputs at competitive prices, and encourage mutually beneficial trade dynamics, while fostering integration of supply chains, technological adoption, and quality standards that meet international benchmarks, with analysts noting that the India-Australia ECTA is a model for modern trade agreements, combining liberalisation with strategic safeguards, and promoting economic resilience, innovation, and sustainable development, and the agreement is expected to contribute to long-term growth in bilateral trade, with projections suggesting substantial increases in export volumes, export revenues, and employment generation in sectors benefiting from duty-free access, while enhancing India’s competitiveness in the Asia-Pacific region and reinforcing Australia’s position as a key economic partner in South Asia, and the government has reiterated its commitment to leveraging trade agreements like ECTA to strengthen India’s global trade presence, support domestic industries, empower exporters, and provide consumers with high-quality, affordable products, as the full implementation of duty-free access is expected to result in immediate gains for Indian exporters while laying the foundation for deeper economic collaboration, knowledge sharing, entrepreneurship, and long-term economic growth in both countries, with officials underscoring that the move will also encourage further bilateral investments, joint research and development, industrial collaborations, and partnerships in areas such as renewable energy, digital economy, and advanced manufacturing, thereby creating a comprehensive framework for sustained economic engagement, while also reinforcing the broader strategic partnership between India and Australia, which encompasses shared values, security cooperation, and regional development initiatives, as trade experts have highlighted that by eliminating tariffs on all Indian exports, the agreement addresses historical barriers, strengthens competitiveness, improves market access.

The Board of Peace is just the latest fig leaf for Israeli impunity

The so-called ceasefire in Gaza was a cynical ruse to secure Israeli captives while giving Israel free rein to starve, murder and assassinate Palestinians at will. The world was duped into swallowing yet another Zionist deception, orchestrated by Israel-first Americans, financed with US taxpayer dollars, and drenched in Palestinian blood. Since the ceasefire was announced, north of 1700 people have been murdered or injured by Israeli fire. In one day this past week, Israel murdered 11 Palestinians in Gaza, including three journalists and children.

By the numbers, this ceasefire has been a misnomer, amounting to an average of 17 Palestinians killed or injured every day over the past 100 days. Some were shot or bombed. Babies died more quietly, but no less violently, freezing to death. Infants die of hypothermia not because winter is unforgiving, but because Israel has destroyed their homes and continues to block the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from bringing safe shelters, winterised tents, and adequate housing into Gaza. This is clearly part of a sinister Israeli policy. Meanwhile, Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, and Donald Trump remain sanguine, insisting the ceasefire has “held” since early October 2025. One can ask, would they make the same assertions if only ten Is-



raeli Jewish children had been killed? The answer is self-evident. This is plain racism—a blood-soaked moral order, a Western and Jewish supremacist calculus that renders Palestinian babies disposable while using a radically different lens for Jewish children.

At the centre of this deception is the so-called yellow line—an ill-defined military boundary marking Israel’s partial withdrawal as part of phase one of the supposed ceasefire. The yellow line has become a trap, a moving frontier. Israel shifts it in the middle of the night, and mows Palestinians in the sunlight, without oversight and without warning. Palestinians believed the ceasefire meant a chance to return to inspect their damaged homes, recover belongings, or forage for wild plants to feed their children. Instead, they find their homes erased, not in

battle, but methodically by an enemy with insatiable hatred. Parallel to this, aid is not allowed to enter Gaza in accordance with the “ceasefire” agreement. The siege has not been lifted.

It was refined. Convoys are delayed. Medical equipment is rejected over technicalities. Fuel, shelter materials, and prefabricated housing are blocked or restricted. Hospitals go without medicine not because of unavailability, but because Israel has revoked the licenses of 37 aid organisations, including Doctors Without Borders, preventing them from sending staff or bringing aid in. As Israel’s atrocities in Gaza continue, Israeli mobs terrorise Palestinian villages, torch homes, and assault civilians with near-total impunity, and as new Jewish-only colonies expand across the occupied West Bank, Israel is es-

calating regional tensions with calculated intent. A familiar display of chicanery designed to provoke a wider confrontation—shift headlines, playing the victim, and drowning culpability in the noise of a larger war. To that end, Israel is openly goading a confrontation with Iran in a bid to draw the US into another made-for-Israel war—one to serve Israeli political interests only, while exacting catastrophic costs on the region. The US remains Israel’s main enabler for laundering war crimes through diplomatic language. Europe’s wishy-washy position is no less cynical.

In late 2025, the European Union debated punitive measures, including suspension of the preferential trade agreement over Israel’s violations of international humanitarian law. Those measures were shelved the moment

the fictional ceasefire was announced. By halting accountability in exchange for a supposed ceasefire, Israel’s allies granted it another pass. It understood the message, adjusted its tactics, and the violations intensified. Demolitions continued, aid strangled, and children died not only by bullets or bombs, but freezing to death. Now we hear echoes of Trump’s archetypal diplomatic hubbub, cynically sold to the world as a “Board of Peace.” A “Board” that includes among its membership an indicted war criminal, who skips Davos’ signing to evade arrest and the International Criminal Court (ICC), is not peace, it’s a farce at the highest level. A “Board” supposedly created for Gaza, yet it excludes Palestinian representation and has morphed into a billion-dollar club with lifetime memberships, governed by a charter that cannot even bring itself to name Gaza, Palestine, or any credible path to self-determination.

At the launch of his “Board,” Trump ignored the continued Israeli killing of Palestinians in Gaza. Instead, he dwelled on his fixation with recovering the body of an Israeli soldier and on disarming the occupied. If this inauguration speech is any indication, the “Board of Peace” will be nothing but a performative shell, not a pathway to human justice. What emerges, in reality, is something closer to a

Jared Kushner real-estate venture run by a self-appointed dictator with no mandate and answerable to no one. Palestinians do not need another peace circus. There can be no “peace” that erases Palestinian agency while entrenching Israeli criminal impunity. What Palestinians demand is self-determination and the right to live in a secure, sovereign state of their own. Anything less is not peace; it’s an international management of subjugation and oppression. What Gaza needs is legal redress for sustained Israeli repression and subjugation. It must be granted unimpeded ingress and egress by land, sea, and air. Gaza must not be condemned to survive as a managed humanitarian dependency, rationed by aid and policed by donors. The international community must reclaim the primacy of international law by allowing the ICC to prosecute indicted Israeli political and military leaders for war crimes and genocide—without American coercion, Western exceptionalism, and moral fraud of double standards. A ceasefire that leaves infants freezing to death is not peace. A “Board” that grants itself the authority to “acquire and dispose of ... property,” while Israel violates agreements in Gaza and Jewish mobs terrorise communities in the West Bank, is just a new phase in the normalisation of mass dispossession and genocide.

Bangladesh: India should finally get down to business

One of the recommendations was to engineer regular tirades by Sheikh Hasina—from her present station in Delhi—against Yunus and his evil clique. Such diatribes should increase in frequency by the day, I had suggested. It must be made the “Indian way” to utilise a friend to mercilessly and continually browbeat and embarrass a contemptuous regime in present-day Dhaka. But India is “governed” by a few éminences grises who were against antagonising the illegitimate Yunus regime that had been propped up by the United States. In fact, the last 15 months have been great education for me.

The Indian state’s inability to comprehend its own backyard was one of the most important lessons that was learnt. It was particularly interesting because India had intervened in 1971 and was responsible for the creation of Bangladesh. Yet, when it came to outright support for a friend and political party that is patently pro-India (recall how Sheikh Hasina handed over the entire ULFA and NDFB leadership to India and acted against the anti-India Islamists!), New Delhi was shying away. Why? Was it because it felt that aspects would straighten themselves up in Dhaka on their own? Or, was it because of a complacency (which is now being regretted) that Yunus and his cabal would sooner or later correct their posture and play ball with India? Indeed, Indian conceit is one of the reasons for its undoing in South Asia. It was also incomprehensible to me as to how the ouster of a close ally was permitted. The reason, it is now known, is that India had no idea about what was brewing in Bangladesh. But the fact that Sheikh Hasina was provided immediate “asylum” also points to the fact that India was actually helpless in the face of the onslaught that led the so-called “July Warriors” to overthrow Sheikh Hasina. But nothing was done to correct the oversight. As aforesaid, it, inef-



fectually, hoped that the internal contradictions of Bangladesh would throw up a situation which would pave the way for a pro-India status quo. Sheikh Hasina was dispensable—New Delhi felt she could not be ignored and that Dhaka would eventually be forced to do business with India. In fact, it had not reckoned that Yunus had powerful puppeteers, and that was precisely why Modi met Yunus in Bangkok on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit and had sent Vikram Misri to meet Yunus on 9 December 2024 over India’s concerns about the minority Hindu population.

The problem with New Delhi is that it measures all its neighbours with the same yardstick when, in effect, they are very different from country to country. Furthermore, Indian mandarins in Raisina Road are so full of themselves that they have neither the patience nor the humility to listen to suggestions made from deprived and lowly observers of the near-abroad, especially if they emanate from the periphery of the country. Instead, they have been actually known for their deep disdain for such advice. They know so much about Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, and, of course, the Northeast that they could be less bothered by advice from the hinterlands.

But I have a right to be proud. I am an Indian. What is more, the last 15 months have proven me correct! India has been intimidat-

ed by a country that it had shed blood for its independence from, a plundering Pakistan. Bangladesh has now become an irreversible add-on to a sinister erstwhile western wing and an equally menacing United States. It has outrageously maimed, raped and killed Hindus in full global view in order to embarrass India. But, gratefully, of late, New Delhi seems to have finally comprehended the imperative of some of the recommendations. On 23 January 2026, Sheikh Hasina, speaking via an audiorecorded message to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club in New Delhi, described the current state of Bangladesh as an “age of terror, lawlessness and democratic exile.” Hasina spoke about the crisis as an existential battle, calling on her supporters to “overthrow the foreign-serving puppet regime” and restore the nation’s constitution. She constantly branded the illegitimate Yunus as a “murderous fascist,” “usurer,” “money launderer,” and “power-hungry traitor”. Bangladesh was reportedly “surprised” and “shocked” by the way Sheikh Hasina spoke. Now, that was necessary and enterprising business! I wonder why it took so long for New Delhi to comprehend the necessity of such a course of action. I have no reason to pat myself on my own back, but I have been, column after column, penning waypoints by which India could have stolen a march over the mockery from former East Paki-

stan since August 2024. Indeed, I was speaking to a friend on 24 January 2026 about the modus operandi of the atrocities that are being systematically committed on the Hindus. The pogroms were being engineered in an extremely calibrated manner. The Islamists are showcasing their deep anti-India ire by agonising India over a slow, tortuous fire. They have not, deliberately, gone on a single rampage against the Hindu population of Bangladesh. A crafty move! They are selectively targeting one Hindu every day and subjecting him to a dismaying end.

The motivation? Let Hindu India suffer painfully, day after day, as its brethren helplessly, and in full view of the world, die an excruciating dog’s death. Also, such “isolated” action would not attract the attention of the human rights watchdogs of the world. In any event, much of the planning for the anti-India actions is being devised in a far-off workstation in Langley, Fairfax County, Virginia, where dubious dualities of the ISI-CIA are working overtime to both humiliate and provoke India. It is primarily the Hindu menfolk of Bangladesh that are being targeted. The Islamist objective is to annihilate only the male Hindu population. The plan for the Hindu womenfolk, as was the case during an earlier anti-India regime’s design, is ‘jane maaris na, ijat maar’ (don’t kill them, rape their women). Incidentally, I am quoting from Bimal Pramanik & Mihir Sinha Roy’s “The Recent Plight of Minorities in Bangladesh”, 28 January 2002, mentioned on pages 111 and 114 from my edited book “Bangladesh: Treading the Taliban Trail”, Vision Books, 2006. But, even as the decibels by which Sheikh Hasina has begun to showcase that both India and the Awami League mean business should grow, India must at once reinstate Sheikh Hasina and her elected government as a “Government in Exile”, unless, of course, the Awami League is allowed to contest the

elections. Indeed, the “Seat of Government” can be moved to Agartala/Kolkata, as was the case with the erstwhile Mujibnagar Government in Exile in 1971. If the Dalai Lama can be permitted to oversee a similar “Government in Exile” in Dharamshala, then there is both logic and precedence in such a show of Indian national strength. There are a plethora of Awami Leaguers and pro-India executives/intelligence/legislators that had left Bangladesh after the immoral fall of August 2024.

These Hasina loyalists can be made to rally behind her even as she heads the “Government in Exile”. Former Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud’s recent statement that between 50 and nearly 60 per cent of Bangladeshis still support the Awami League and its alliance partners is corroborative of what I have been stating so far. The overarching and spirited speech of Sheikh Hasina would overwhelm the warrens and marshes of Bangladesh, reaching and inspiring every Awami League supporter currently in hiding or in a state of disarray inside the country. It is high time that India embarked upon a decisive regime change exercise. There is no time for “strategic patience”. Indeed, such a step was part of my 7 April 2025 recommendation. It is quite simple really.

Yes, it will take guts. But everyone around the world at this time seems to be in a mood to flex their muscles. So-called superpowers are kidnapping foreign heads of state in the middle of the night, planning takeovers of countries and imposing unholy tariffs. Why not India? If the head of the Research & Analysis Wing can put together a team of strategists and work out a Bangladesh “Government in Exile” with Sheikh Hasina as its head, the world will wonder at India’s boldness, not to speak of the shivers that will crawl down Yunus’ decrepit, octogenarian spine. There must be no delay in mounting such a course of action.

# Amazon partnership comes to an end, UPS plans to eliminate 30,000 additional positions in 2026 and increase automation

**New Delhi:** United Parcel Service has announced plans to cut 30,000 jobs this year and “further deploy automation” across its network. The assertion came from Chief Financial Officer Brian Dykes during an investor call on Tuesday amid continued efforts to untangle a long-term partnership with Amazon. UPS had previously slashed some 48,000 positions in 2025 and closed down 93 facilities.

“In terms of variable costs, we expect to reduce operational positions by up to 30,000. This will be accomplished through attrition, and we expect to offer a second voluntary separation program for full-time drivers,” multiple reports quoted Dykes as saying. The company uses the term ‘operational positions’ for delivery and warehouse workers. Dykes also indicated during the call that UPS would offer a “second voluntary separation program for full-time drivers”. The announcement comes nearly a year after UPS announced plans to halve its Amazon shipment volumes by mid-2026 UPS has removed tens of thousands of workers over the past year in the midst of an elaborate turnaround plan. The company made 48,000 positions redundant in 2025 and now appears poised



to continue the trend. Dykes said “up to 30,000” operational positions would be removed within the next few months — with a projected \$3 billion in savings. UPS reportedly had around half a million employees at the start of last year. The company also said it had identified 24 buildings for

closure during the first half of 2026 and increase automation. Additional closures are also possible later in the year. Dykes noted that UPS had closed 93 buildings and deployed automation in 57 during 2025. The shipping company had tied up with Amazon in the late 1990s and helped the

e-commerce giant led by Jeff Bezos build its own logistics strategy. Dependence had declined as Amazon aggressively expanded its in-house delivery network over the years — with UPS announcing plans to cut Amazon shipment volumes by over 50% last year.

## Gold Rate 28th January 2026: Gold is up by 2.85%

**New Delhi:** On 28 January 2026, the price of 24K gold at ₹162,670 per 10 grams, reflecting a gain of ₹4,500 compared to its previous close. Meanwhile, 22K gold is at ₹149,114 per 10 grams. Gold prices in India are largely influenced by international spot gold rates, US dollar fluctuations, and import duties on Gold among other things. Gold prices in India continue to remain higher than in Dubai. On 28 January 2026 the price of 24K gold in India is at ₹162,670 per 10 grams, while in Dubai it is ₹112,816, reflecting a difference of ₹49,854 or 44.19%. Similarly, 22K and 18K gold prices in India were also about 44.19% costlier compared to the price of gold in Dubai, not accounting for fees, duties, and taxes. Gold prices reached new record levels after a steep decline in the US dollar intensified demand for safe-haven assets.

The greenback slid to its lowest level in four years after President Donald Trump downplayed concerns over dollar weakness, indicating tolerance for a softer currency to enhance export competitiveness. Policy uncertainty in Washington, including renewed tariff threats and criticism of the Federal Reserve’s independence, further supported precious metals.

**Outlook for Gold Investors** While the Fed is expected to keep rates unchanged, markets are watching closely for signals on future cuts. Robust central bank purchases and sustained ETF inflows have also driven gold’s nearly 20% year-to-date rise, with silver sharply outperforming.

## RBI to slash rates by 0.25% next week in this cycle’s last cut

**New Delhi:** The Reserve Bank will opt for another 0.25 per cent decrease in key repo rate in its next monetary policy review on February 6, in what is expected to be the last cut in the current easing cycle, a foreign brokerage said on Tuesday. “...we believe that RBI could continue to ease interest rates based on forward inflation rates staying benign and growth likely softening,” economists at Bank of America said in a note. There is an “uncertainty” in the growth outlook and the RBI is likely to utilise the policy space to take the repo rate down to 5.25 per cent.

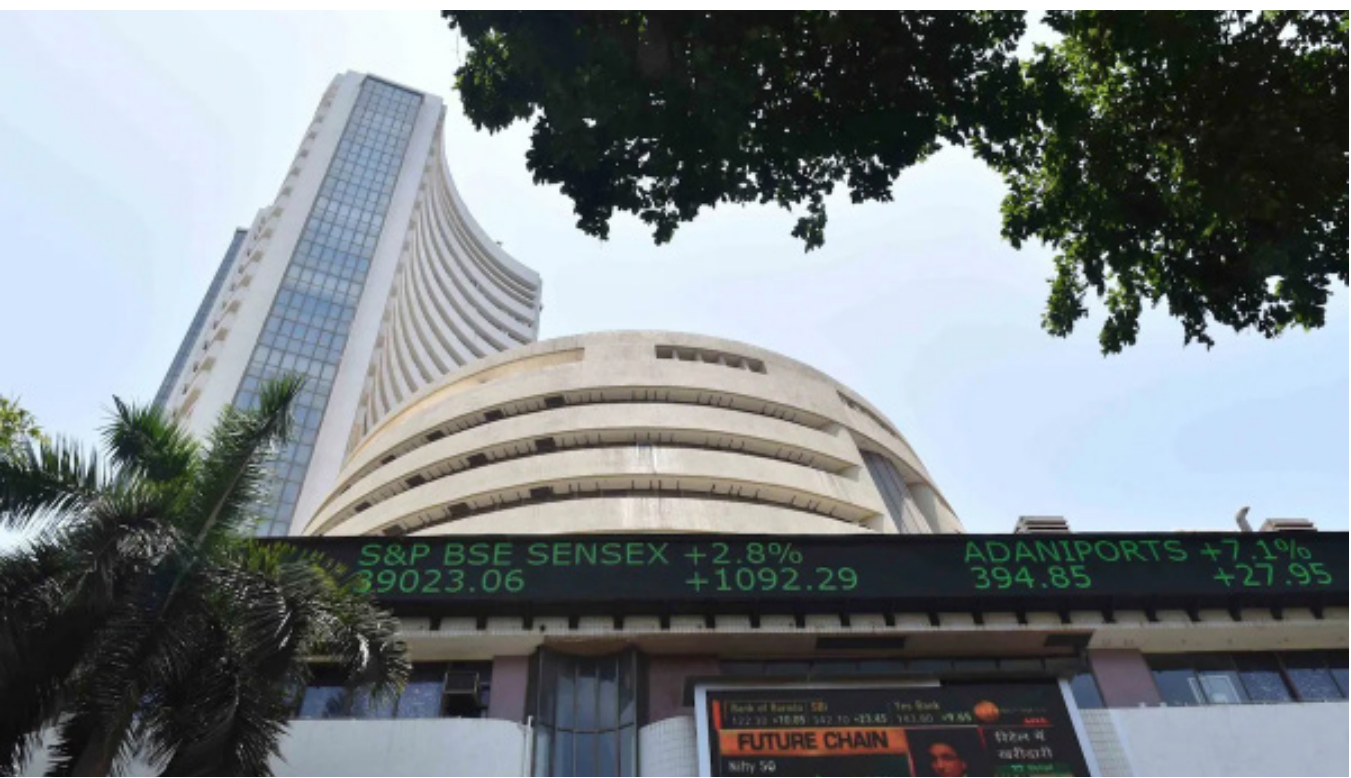
The move will be accompanied by significant liquidity injections, with a slightly longer-term assurance on liquidity, the brokerage said. The Reserve Bank will opt for another 0.25 per cent decrease in key repo rate in its next monetary policy review on February 6, in what is expected to be the last cut in the current easing cycle, a foreign brokerage said on Tuesday. “...we believe that RBI could continue to ease interest rates based on forward inflation rates staying benign and growth likely softening,” economists at Bank of America said in a note. There is an “uncertainty” in the growth outlook and the RBI is likely to utilise the policy space to take the repo rate down to 5.25 per cent. The move will be accompanied by significant liquidity injections, with a slightly longer-term assurance on liquidity, the brokerage said. In the report, which comes days after the central bank announced over Rs 2 lakh in liquidity infusions, the brokerage said that persistent forex interventions and volatile liquidity movements warrant “material liquidity support” from RBI to aid transmission of rate cuts. But if it does not, RBI may continue to give a dovish guidance to keep its options open,” it said. Inflation is likely to under-shoot RBI’s near-term projections, and the central bank is also likely to raise its GDP growth forecasts, the report said. The high-frequency data is showing some resilience, particularly in the industrial and consumer sectors, the report said, adding that RBI can draw some comfort from the same.

# Markets rally: Sensex surges over 600 points, Nifty gains 197 as India-EU FTA cheers investors

**New Delhi:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged in early trade on Wednesday, extending their previous day’s rally, on optimism over India-EU FTA. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 646.49 points to 82,503.97 during initial trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 196.7 points to 25,372.10. From the 30-Sensex firms, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bharat Electronics, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major gainers.

However, Asian Paints dropped nearly 6 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 4.83 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,073.92 crore in the December quarter of FY26 on a year-on-year basis on account of exceptional items as implementation of the new labour code and impairment of loss in a subsidiary. Maruti, HCL Tech, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the other laggards.

India and the European Union on Tuesday sealed a landmark free trade agreement—billed as the “mother of all deals” -- to create a market of two billion people with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top EU leadership unveiling a transformative five-year agenda to largely leverage trade and defence in protecting the rules-based world order. US markets ended mostly higher Tuesday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 0.52 per cent to USD 67.92 per barrel. “FIIs continued their selling spree with cash market selling of Rs 3,068 crore. DIIs, flush with funds, aggressively bought beaten down fundamen-



tally strong stocks for a massive Rs 8,999 crore. After the India-EU trade deal, which is a big long-term positive, investors are now focused on the Union Budget to be presented on Feb first,” VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said. On Tuesday, the Sensex climbed 319.78 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 81,857.48.

The Nifty surged 126.75 points or 0.51 per cent to end at 25,175.40. The free trade agreement that will account for almost a quarter of the global GDP will reduce tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the EU and cut duties on over 97 per cent of the EU’s exports to India, according to officials. Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors offloaded eq-

uities worth Rs 3,068.49 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) outnumbered them by buying stocks worth Rs 8,999.71 crore, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, South Korea’s Kospi, Shanghai’s SSE Composite index and Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index traded higher, while Japan’s Nikkei 225 index quoted lower.

## Prior to the union budget, a Congress study highlights the accuracy of GDP estimates

**New Delhi:** Ahead of the Union Budget, the Congress released its report on the economy, questioning the current quality of economic data and claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s development model has led to jobless growth, which can’t be fixed until the Centre increases transparency, welcomes critique and acknowledges failures. The report titled “Inequality on the rise, Welfare in Retreat: Real State of the Economy 2026” points out that the estimated GDP growth rate of 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal year has not resulted in gainful employment. “The BJP government’s tenure has been marked by diminished confidence in India’s economic numbers due to concerns that the government manipulates official data to suit its political agendas,” the report said, noting how the IMF downgraded India’s GDP data to a C grade. The report, published by the All India Congress Committee’s research department, highlighted the rupee-dollar exchange rate crossing the 90 mark and negative net FDI. Household debt as a percentage of GDP increased to 41



per cent in FY24, and the average debt amount increased by 40 per cent since March 2021, the report added. “Most of the job creation has been in the gig economy, that is poorly regulated, with workers complaining of exploitation. Post the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant number of workers returned to farms in the face of job destruction in urban India,” the report adds. “When the masses face poor economic prospects, empathetic governments strengthen welfare safety nets. The Modi government has instead chosen to dismantle the carefully constructed and impactful rights-based welfare framework established by the

UPA government,” it said. At the release of the report, party research head and economist M. V. Rajeev Gowda said, “What happened to Make in India? Agriculture’s share rose from 44.1 per cent to 46.1 per cent...top 10 per cent own 65 per cent of India’s wealth; bottom half own 6.4 per cent; top 1 per cent own 40 per cent.

“Four out of five Indians subsist on less than ₹200 per day. One third subsist on less than ₹100/day. Net household financial savings are at a five-decade low of 5.2 per cent, household debt is sharply up to 41 per cent from 35 per cent in 2019,” he added.

# NSDL Q3 results Can the depository giant outpace industry growth trends again

**New Delhi:** India’s oldest and largest securities depository firm, National Securities Depository (NSDL), is in focus today. The NSDL share price is up over 2% ahead of Q3FY26 results. However, the stock has fallen 5% in the last one month. In fact, NSDL’s stock has declined 25% from its all-time high but has delivered a nearly 7% return since listing. Vijay Chandok, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, remains optimistic about the tailwinds going forward. Speaking to investors after the Q2 results, he had said that, “We are seeing strong tailwinds of domestic participation as we move forward. We see macroeconomic stability, and we see continued digital transformation providing a very strong foundation for sustainable long-term growth.” NSDL had made a stellar debut at the D-Street on August 06, 2025. The stock is listed at a premium of 10% premium to its issue price of Rs 880. The initial public offering (IPO) was entirely an offer for sale of up to 5.01 crore equity shares by existing shareholders to raise Rs 4,011 crore by going public. These shareholders include IDBI Bank, the National Stock Exchange of India, and the State Bank of India. In the first results declared after listing, NSDL posted a strong growth across all metrics during Q2FY26. The company’s revenue from operations rose 28.2% sequentially to Rs 400 crore in the second quarter of the current financial year, compared to Rs 312 crore in the previous quarter. The company’s consolidated net profit surged 23.2% quarter-over-quarter to Rs 110 crore compared to Rs 89.6 crore in the preceding quarter. On the operating front, NSDL’s EBITDA rose 34.5% QoQ to Rs 128 crore in Q2FY26, versus Rs 95.1 crore in the last quarter of the same financial year. The margins expanded to 32% versus 30.5%. As per data shared



during Q2, the total number of Demat accounts for NSDL crossed 4 crores and stood at 4.19 million as of September 30, 2025, with an incremental run rate of 4.9%. According to NSDL MD and CEO, “this contrasted with the industry, which showed a de-growth of about 39% on incremental run rate.” Speaking to analysts after the Q2 results, he specified that, “As a result of this, our incremental market share in Demat account additions during Quarter 2 stands at 17.6%, which is a sharp rise from 9.9% in the same period last year. So, we have seen an improvement of 770 basis points in the retail Demat account incremental market share in the current quarter.” NSDL was originally incorporated in April 2012 as “NSDL Depository Ltd.”, and it is a SEBI-reg-

istered market infrastructure institution (MII). It is a pioneer in the dematerialisation of securities in Indian capital markets. After almost a year of incorporation, the company’s name was changed to “National Securities Depository Limited”. The company has been in depository operations for over 26 years, as per the data provided in the DRHP. NSDL started operations for the first time in 1996. Coming to the core business, it provides electronic infrastructure for the dematerialisation of securities and facilitates the electronic settlement of trades in the Indian securities market. NSDL was among the first few global depositories to directly implement dematerialisation. It bypassed the two-step immobilisation and subsequent dematerialisation process.

# At least seven dead and 800,000 without power as major winter storm hits US

**Dubai:** A dangerous winter storm has swept across the US, leaving at least seven people dead and cutting power to hundreds of thousands of homes.Schools and roads across the country have been closed and flights have been cancelled as “life threatening” conditions stretched from Texas to New England, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).At least two people died of hypothermia in Louisiana, and other deaths linked to the storm have been reported in Texas, Tennessee and Kansas.s of Sunday afternoon, more than 800,000 households had lost power, according to poweroutage.us. Meanwhile, more than 11,000 flights were cancelled, FlightAware reported Widespread heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain, which is a dangerous phenomenon where cooled rain dropletsNew York state Governor Kathy Hochul warned residents to stay inside and off roads.“This is certainly the coldest weather we’ve seen, the coldest winter storm we’ve seen in years,” she said on Sunday.“A sort of an arctic siege has taken over our state and many other states across the nation.”Hochul said the “brutal” conditions were expected to bring the longest cold stretch and highest snow falls in years.“It is bone chilling and it is dangerous,” she said.Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear said on Sunday that the state was seeing more ice and less snow than was originally predicted. That is not good news for Kentucky,” he said. Weather experts have warned that one of the biggest dangers of the storm is ice, which has the potential to damage trees, down power lines and make roads unsafe.In Virginia and Kentucky, authorities have responded to hundreds of crashes on roads.

Canadians have also been hit with heavy snow and hundreds of cancelled flights.Officials estimate that there will be 15-30cm freeze instantly on surfaces, could last for days, and the storm could affect around 180 million Americans - more than half the population. The snow and the ice will be very, very slow to melt and won’t be going away anytime soon, and that’s going to hinder any recovery efforts,” Allison Santorelli, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, told the BBC’s US media partner CBS News.Louisiana’s Department of Health confirmed on Sunday that two men had died of hypothermia.The mayor Nearly half the states have declared emergencies, and schools across the country are already cancelling classes in anticipation of the storm continuing into Monday. The US Senate has also scrapped a scheduled vote for Monday evenin In declaring an emergency in the nation’s capital, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said: “We’re experiencing the biggest snowstorm in a decade in DC this weekend.”While places in



the north such as the Dakotas and Minnesota are used to below- freezing temperatures in winter, it is unusual to see such extreme cold in states like Texas, Louisiana and Tennessee, where temperatures are around 15-20C below the seasonal average.Those states could also see ice accretions of around an inch caused by freezing rain.The polar vortex - a ring of strong westerly winds that form above the Arctic every winter containing a pool of very cold air - led to the powerful storm, according to weather experts. When the winds are strong, they stay in place, however when the winds weaken, the vortex loops further south and cold air plunges toward the US. As the cold air meets mild air in the south, the air rises and storm fronts form.In this case, the winter storm is pushing northwards and eastwards, clearing the Canadian mari-

time by Tuesday but leaving more cold air in its wake. It is forecast to stay dangerously cold into the start of February.Some experts contend climate change could influence the behaviour of the polar vortex due to changes in sea surfaces temperatures in our warming world.of Austin, Texas, said there had been an “exposure-related” death.Officials in Kansas said a woman, whose body was found on Sunday afternoon covered in snow, “may have succumbed to hypothermia”.Weather-related deaths of three people have also been reported in Tennessee. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani wrote in a post on X that at least five people in the city had died on Saturday but added their cause of death was yet to be determined.He said, however, “It is a reminder that every year New Yorkers succumb to the cold”.

# “Feels Like a Cover-Up” Minnesota AG Keith Ellison Slams Crackdown

**Dubai:** A federal judge in Minnesota heard arguments Monday in a lawsuit filed by city and state officials to halt Trump’s deployment of thousands of federal immigration agents to Minnesota. “The federal government cannot coerce us into doing it their way,” says Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, who is part of the group that brought the lawsuit. As the Trump administration continues to obstruct local investigations into the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal agents in Minnesota this month, we speak to Ellison and Georgetown University law professor Stephen Vladeck to discuss state and federal jurisdiction over investigations and potential prosecutions. Ellison also responds to the announcement that “border czar” Tom Homan is headed to Minnesota to replace U.S. Border Patrol “commander-at-large” Gregory Bovino as the public face of Trump’s immigration enforcement surge. AMY GOODMAN: As protests continue in response to the fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis, a federal judge in Minnesota heard arguments Monday in a lawsuit filed by state officials, alongside the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, to halt Trump’s unprecedented deployment of thousands of federal immigration agents to the state. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, who was in court yesterday, has likened the deployment of ICE agents to a “federal invasion.” U.S. District Judge Kate Menendez questioned the Trump administration on whether its militarization of Minnesota is intended to, quote, “punish plaintiffs for adopting sanctuary laws and policies,” unquote. Attorney General Ellison spoke after the hourslong court hearing. ATTORNEY GENERAL KEITH ELLISON: This is the single largest deployment of immigration officers in one place at one time, in a state that is not even in the top of immigration. What justifies the disproportionate flood? Nothing legitimate. But the president has been clear: retribution.

AMY GOODMAN: In a separate hearing later in the day, a Trump administration lawyer assured a Minneapolis federal judge that body-camera footage of Alex Pretti’s fatal shooting was being preserved by federal investigators. The lawyer did not specify whether the bodycam footage would be shared with Minnesota authorities, and did not confirm how many agents

were wearing cameras at the time of the shooting. Minnesota state officials are urging the court to extend an emergency order prohibiting the Trump administration from destroying or altering evidence after Border Patrol agents shot Pretti dead. The federal government has blocked local investigators from reviewing the evidence, just like it did after the fatal shooting of Renee Good. It’s great to have you with us. Can you talk about what happened in court yesterday? And respond to — we had you on just on Friday. Now another killing of a Minnesotan. Can you respond to that killing, and what you demanded in court on Monday morning?

ATTORNEY GENERAL KEITH ELLISON: Well, first of all, Alex Pretti was an amazing man. He was an ICU nurse at the Veterans Administration Hospital. He devoted his life to caring for people who were people who defended America. And yet he was shot down in the streets of Minneapolis also trying to defend a woman who was thrown to the ground by ICE agents. So, I took it very personally when the secretary of homeland security defamed him, as did Bovino and others. And so, let me just state, say that. I’ll also note that on Monday, our court hearing in the morning, our 9 a.m. court hearing, was really about saying that as Minnesota has the right to devote Minnesota resources to Minnesota activities, and we are not obligated to operate as extensions of ICE, then the federal government and ICE cannot then say, “Well, if you won’t do what we want you to do, we’re going to inundate your state with 4,000 agents. We’re going to raise all kind of problems and abuse people and do shootings, unauthorized entries into homes,” all, I mean, like massive abuses. And so, essentially, what we’re saying is the federal government cannot coerce us into doing it their way. Federalism and the structure of this country, the balance between state and federal power, cannot be maintained, as is constitutionally required under the 10th Amendment, if the federal government can try to bully a state out of what it could never get in a courtroom because they don’t have the right. So, that’s what the argument was all about. The judge was very thoughtful, very smart, asked the right questions, and I’m confident that we’ll get a good outcome. And if we don’t, then we’re going to continue.

# Can ICE Forcibly Enter Homes Without a Warrant

**Dubai:** ICE is asserting federal immigration officers have the power to forcibly enter homes without a judicial warrant. “That’s just not true,” says legal scholar Stephen Vladeck, who says the claim directly violates the Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. “What we’re really seeing here is an effort to twist a handful of old cases that have recognized circumstances in which the government doesn’t need a judicial warrant to enter a home.” Vladeck also encourages witnesses to share video evidence of federal agents’ abuses to support future prosecution efforts. This is Democracy Now!, democracy-now.org, The War and Peace Report. I’m Amy Goodman, with Juan González.

We are continuing our conversation with Georgetown University Law Center professor Stephen Vladeck, who’s written a piece, co-authored a piece, in The New York Times, “This May Be the Only Path to Accountability for the Minneapolis Shootings.”I wanted to ask you about the Associated Press reporting that ICE is asserting federal immigration officers have the power to forcibly enter homes without a judicial warrant, in what legal experts say is a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment. ICE made the sweeping claim in a secretive memo dated May 12th. Two whistleblowers shared the memo with Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal.Last week, Homeland Security’s general counsel Jimmy Percival wrote a piece for The Wall Street Journal headlined “How the Deep State Thwarted ICE Administrative Warrants.” In it, Percival claimed, quote, “If the police come to a home to make an arrest, police generally must obtain a judicial warrant before entering without permission. Illegal aliens, however, don’t have the same rights as citizens. Under federal immigration law, officers may issue an administrative warrant, which means that the probable-cause finding is made by an executive branch officer rather than a judicial officer.” Again, that’s a quote of the — of general counsel for Homeland Security, Percival. Professor Vladeck, your response to these claims made by Percival? And talk about the whole TikTok story. Really, there are two basic assertions here that are

both false. The first assertion that Percival made in his op-ed is that what he calls “illegal aliens” have less, fewer Fourth Amendment rights than other noncitizens and than U.S. citizens. Amy, that’s just not true. The Supreme Court has never said that. There are a smattering of lower court decisions that have suggested other contexts and other rights where maybe noncitizens, in general, and undocumented immigrants, in particular, have less protection, but none of those cases are Fourth Amendment cases. So, just from the get-go, this whole framing is incorrect. But there’s also this really, I think, odious attempt to portray noncitizens who are subject to what’s called a final order of removal as, quote, “fugitives from justice,” unquote. That’s just not true. The way our immigration process works, there are countless tens of thousands of noncitizens who might receive a final order of removal, but who are allowed to remain at large until a date by which the government says you must report to us or leave the country voluntarily. Those folks aren’t fugitives.

There are limits on how long the government can detain noncitizens pending with their removal, before they have to be released. Those folks are not fugitives. And so, what we’re really seeing here is an effort to twist a handful of old cases that have recognized circumstances in which the government doesn’t need a judicial warrant to enter a home into this sort of systemic view that as long as they’re looking for, quote, “illegal aliens,” a term they don’t define with any specificity, they can go into anyone’s homes, Amy, including American citizens’ homes, without a judicially signed warrant. There’s no precedent for that. It reflects a remarkable attempt to shift what have been the historical precedents. And, you know, I think the alarming question about the Percival op-ed is this is the general counsel of the Department of Homeland Security, the agency that runs ICE, CBP, you name it. Either he knows all of these things and wrote that op-ed anyway, or he doesn’t. I’m not sure which of those is less comforting, but neither is especially reassuring.

# Who was Alex Pretti, the intensive care nurse shot dead in Minneapolis

**Dubai:** A man who was shot dead by federal agents in Minneapolis has been identified by his family as 37-year-old intensive care nurs Alex Pretti.He has been describe as an avid outdoorsman who loved mountain biking and is understood to have joined protests after Renee Good, also 37, was shot dead by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in her car earlier this month.Conflicting accounts have emerged about the moments leading up to his death.The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said an agent fired in self-defence after Pretti, who they claim had a handgun, resisted attempts to disarm him. Some eyewitnesses and officials, as well as Pretti’s family, have challenged that account. Videos show no evidence to support the claim he used any armed force to threaten agents.Pretti worked as an ICU nurse at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital, his family said in a statement. They told the Associated Press news agency (AP) that he was upset by US President Donald Trump’s crackdown on immigration in the city.Pretti’s mother also said her son cared immensely about the Trump administration’s rollback of environmental regulations.He hated that, you know, people were just trashing the land,” Susan Pretti told AP.She added: “He was an outdoorsman. He took his dog everywhere he went. You know, he loved this country, but he hated what people were doing to it.” Who was Alex Pretti, the intensive care nurse shot dead in Minneapolis? 19 hours agoJacob Phillips Family handout Alex is pictured in woodland wearing shorts and walking boots while kneeling on the ground Family handoutAlex Pretti was killed in Minneapolis on Saturday A man who was shot dead by federal agents in Minneapolis has been identified by his family as 37-year-old inten-

sive care nurse Alex Pretti.He has been described as an avid outdoorsman who loved mountain biking and is understood to have joined protests after Renee Good, also 37, was shot dead by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in her car earlier this month.Conflicting accounts have emerged about the moments leading up to his death.The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said an agent fired in self-defence after Pretti, who they claim had a handgun, resisted attempts to disarm him. Some eyewitnesses and officials, as well as Pretti’s family, have challenged that account. Videos show no evidence to support the claim he used any armed force to threaten agents. Pretti worked as an ICU nurse at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital, his family said in a statement. They told the Associated Press news agency (AP) that he was upset by US President Donald Trump’s crackdown on immigration in the city. Pretti’s mother also said her son cared immensely about the Trump administration’s rollback of environmental regulations “He hated that, you know, people were just trashing the land,” Susan Pretti told AP.She added: “He was an outdoorsman. He took his dog everywhere he went. You know, he loved this country, but he hated what people were doing to it.”Latest updates: US citizen Alex Pretti shot dead by federal agents in Minneapolis Video shows moments around fatal shooting in Minneapolis What we know about the fatal shooting of Alex PrettiPretti had no interactions with law enforcement beyond traffic tickets, family say Prettilovedadventureswithhisbeloved Catahoula Leopard dog Joule, who died around a year ago, AP reported. His family said he had no interaction with law enforcement be-



yond a handful of traffic tickets. According to AP, court records show he had no criminal record. Pretti’sparents,wholivein Wisconsin, said they had also recently told their son to be careful while protesting “We had this discussion with him two weeks ago or so, you know, that go ahead and protest, but do not engage, do not do anything stupid, basically,” his father Michael Pretti told AP.After seeing videos suggesting their son was a “domestic terrorist,” Pretti’s family issued a statement saying “the sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting”. They claimed videos showed Pretti was not holding a gun when he was tackled by federal agents.“Please get the truth out

about our son. He was a good man,” they urged in their statement.Pretti was a Democratic voter and had taken part in the wave of street protests after George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020, his ex-wife told AP.She said that he was someone who may shout at law enforcement officers at a protest but had never known him to be physically confrontational.”And he said he knows that. He knew that.”Pretti’s family also explained he owned a handgun and had a permit to carry a concealed handgun in Minnesota - but they had never known him to carry it.Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O’Hara also said police believed he was a lawful gun owner with a permit to carry, the BBC’s US partner CBS reported.

# How bad is maternal health in Europe, and how can we fix it

A new European study has found high levels of maternal ill health, alongside persistent work-life balance and career penalties, in the UK and mainland Europe.

## How bad is maternal mental health in Europe?

Worldwide about 10% of pregnant women and 13% of women who have just given birth develop a mental health issue, in particular depression, according to the World Health Organization. Make Mothers Matter's study of nearly 10,000 [exact number 9,600] mums in 12 European countries found that more than two-thirds of the mothers who took part in the survey said they felt mentally overloaded, while over the past year, a third reported anxiety, 20% depression and 18% burnout.

A third of mums in Sweden and a quarter of German and British mothers reported depression, while 42% of Spanish respondents said they experienced anxiety in the previous year. "The findings shows that mental health strain is the norm, not the exception, especially for mothers with young children, multiple children, low incomes, or single-parent households. Yet, caregiving during early childhood is one of the most powerful determinants of lifelong health and wellbeing," says Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, director of health systems at WHO/Europe.

## What is the impact of such levels of overload?

"Mothers' mental health is deteriorating because



they face huge challenges, too often without support and crucially: because policies haven't caught up with reality," says Ann-Katrin Orr, policy officer at Mental Health Europe. "You can't pile work pressure, care responsibilities and rigid gender norms and roles on to women while reducing social supports and then be surprised when anxiety and depression rise."

A 2024 study in Switzerland found a substantial mental health penalty for women after the birth of their first child, with a 50% increase in the use of antidepressants compared to before childbirth and a

75% increase by the child's sixth birthday, which the authors concluded was a direct consequence of giving birth and the changed life circumstances and time constraints that accompany it, as the penalty is rising over time and is higher for women who are employed.

## Career penalties are still too high

Across the 12 countries surveyed, more than one quarter said having a baby had negatively affected their careers, rising to around one-third of mothers in Ireland (36%), the UK (31%) and Germany (31%). A shocking 6% of respondents said they had

been sacked or forced out of their company due to being pregnant or a new mother. While fewer mothers in Ireland (2%), the UK (4%) or Sweden (4%) reported being fired or made to leave, 9% of Portuguese and Czech respondents lost their jobs due to motherhood. Being a mother also had a detrimental impact on applying for jobs, with 16% saying they felt discriminated against during the recruitment process and 30% saying their opportunities to progress had been restricted. A fifth said they were ruled out of a pay rise and more than a third lost income.

## Work pressures and childcare difficulties don't help

For many respondents, juggling caring as well as work proves too much, with mums having to solely pick up the majority of household tasks. While 74% of Portuguese and 62% of mothers in Sweden went back to work full-time after the birth of their child, only 29% of German mums did, with 42% going part-time and 21% leaving the workforce altogether to stay at home. Mothers in the UK were the most likely to cite the cost of childcare as a reason for changing their working status. While 17%

of British mums said the expense of nurseries and childminders caused them to alter their work patterns, this was only a factor for 7% of mothers in EU countries.

## What would improve mothers' emotional and psychological wellbeing?

The study found that barely one-third of the women surveyed had a gradual return to work after having their babies and fewer than half had adjusted working hours. Orr says that has to change. "Flexible working hours, strong parental leave, accessible, community-based mental health services and stigma-free support aren't 'extras', they're essential to adequately tackle gender inequalities." "Mental health support should be an integral, unstigmatised part of antenatal and postnatal care, and supportive, flexible social and employment environments should be the expected norm for all mums," adds Dr Alain Gregoire, the honorary president of the Maternal Mental Alliance UK. "This requires action without delay across government and society." That means expanding mental health services and improving workplace support to ensure that caregivers are not left to cope alone, says Dr Azzopardi-Muscat. "Supporting mothers through social connection, flexible work, and accessible mental healthcare is essential not only for parents, but for the healthy development of children and the resilience of society as a whole."

# Herb Roasted Turkey Breast

DirectionsPreheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Remove the turkey breast from the fridge 30 minutes before cooking to bring it to room temperature. Cut 3 pieces of kitchen twine and set aside. Add the butter, parsley, lemon zest, thyme, onion powder, garlic, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper to a small bowl. Use a fork or a rubber spatula to incorporate all of the ingredients into the butter.

Set aside. Pat the turkey breast dry. Using clean hands, starting at one end of the breast, slide your fingers under the skin to create a pocket between the meat and the skin. Use your hands to transfer the butter into the pocket and smooth the butter into an even layer. Use the kitchen twine to tie the turkey horizontally in 3 places. This will help the turkey breast

cook evenly and remain juicy. Flip the turkey breast so that it is skin-side down. Drizzle it with 1 teaspoon olive oil and sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Flip the turkey over and repeat the same seasoning process. Arrange the onion slices on a small rimmed baking sheet. Pour 1/3 cup water into the baking sheet and place the turkey breast on top of the onions. Transfer to the oven and roast for 1 hour. Remove the turkey from the oven and baste it with the butter and juices from the baking sheet. Continue to roast until the internal temperature is 160 degrees F, another 20 to 25 minutes. Allow the turkey to cool for 15 minutes. (In this time the internal temperature will rise another 5 degrees.) Slice the turkey and serve it with the roasted onions.



# The best electric toothbrushes: prioritise your pearly whites with our expert-tested picks, from Oral-B to Philips

If you grew up using a conventional toothbrush – essentially a stick with bristles on the end – you may be surprised to learn just how long the electric toothbrush has been around. The first was designed in the late 1930s, but that model was a long way from the sleek, feature-packed and Bluetooth-enabled beasts you can buy today. There are now dozens of ultra-advanced versions on the market, but which ones are worth your cash? To help answer that question, my teeth have become figurative guinea pigs. Over the past year, I've put a bunch of electric toothbrushes from Oral-B, Philips, Suri, Ordo, Silk'n, Foreo and more through their paces to separate the best from the rest. Here are my conclusions. As well as having the physical qualities required to test electric toothbrushes (my own teeth and a reliable toothpaste budget), I've been testing electronics – phones, drones and everything in between – for more than a decade. Also – and I'll put this delicately to prevent you from closing the page in justified disgust – as someone who has to wear a retainer every night after Invisalign treatment, the toothbrushes weren't short of nasties to clean during testing. They've seen things, man. I doubt many people include the four minutes spent brushing their teeth as a highlight of even the most tedious day, so spare a thought for the months when it has become my life's obsessive focus. Fortunately, and purely by chance, my

first test coincided with a dentist's visit in which I appeared to have undergone a Damascene conversion to good oral hygiene, so it did have its upside. Anyway, the process was actually pretty simple: brush, brush and brush again, taking note of mouthfeel, grip, cleanliness, the features that appealed and those little things that made me irrationally grumpy. I used plaque-disclosing tablets, which turn your teeth a charming shade of pink and blue to reveal areas where plaque resides. Even the cheapest brushes did a good job of removing the blue, though, even if they didn't feel as clean, so this test proved unhelpful. Ultimately, while each of the 22 brushes I tested was leagues ahead of manual toothbrushes, I ordered them based on performance, features, feel, stamina and – perhaps most importantly, given how close the final results were – value for money. A quick note on that: toothbrush recommendations and retail prices (RRPs) are often what you'd call "aspirational". They're frequently on offer, and even £500 models regularly go on sale for less than half price. It's worth clicking through and checking what today's price is on the off-chance. The Spotlight Sonic Pro is a great all-rounder, with excellent features and a price that doesn't verge on ridiculous. Founded by two sibling dentists, Spotlight has only two electric toothbrushes for adults at the moment, and the Pro model tested here delivers on every metric that counts. First of all, the

Spotlight Sonic Pro performs an impressive clean. Its four modes range from 30,000 (gentle) to 50,000 (polish) brush strokes a minute (BPM). That makes it the second most powerful sonic brush I tested, and the two that delivered more have RRP's starting at £400. While not completely necessary for a healthy mouth, such speeds help provide that "fresh from the hygienist" feeling, even when your teeth are crying out for a thorough clean after a day mainlining soft drinks. It also packs a pressure sensor to make sure you're not brushing too hard and potentially damaging your gums, and there are four lights just below the head to show how far you are into your two-minute brushing cycle. Flip the heads over and you'll find a tongue cleaner, plus it comes with a handy travel case too. While this doesn't charge the brush, the magnetic USB-C charging base is pretty compact, and a single charge can last up to 70 days, which is above average for an electric toothbrush. Even at the higher speeds I was using it at, it didn't show any signs of slowing down during the testing period, so that feels accurate. If you can do without the pressure sensor, progress lights, tongue cleaner and polish setting, you're likely to be just as happy with the non-Pro version and can save a few quid. There were three strong contenders in the £50-65 price bracket that I was considering for the best-value pick (the £59.99 Ordo Sonic+ and the Silk'n Sonic Smile

Plus (usually £50) were the others), but I ultimately chose the £65 Icy Bear because it was the only one to come with a pressure sensor. In fact, this was the cheapest toothbrush I reviewed that had one. Why we love it: Oddly, the pressure sensor isn't pitched as the main selling point, which is instead, rather confusingly, fingerprint recognition. This isn't some kind of added dental security – it's to prevent it from being activated in luggage without needing an extra case, and it works pretty well (with a perfectly angled edge and a lot of effort, I was able to turn it on without skin contact – but it's not something you'll do by accident). Otherwise, it ticks all the boxes. The top of the handle glows white when in use, and flashes ominously if you're pushing too hard, and there are a generous five brushing modes. At its maximum power, it hits a very respectable 40,000 BPM for a solid clean, too. The original Suri toothbrush was not only solid, but also the only real choice for the climate-conscious in an industry that doesn't seem to have taken much notice of the climate emergency. Unfortunately, it had a couple of issues that held it back: it lacked a pressure sensor, and the spring-pin charging system broke no fewer than three times on me. Both of these problems have been fixed in Suri 2.0, making it an easy recommendation. Why we love it: In short, you no longer need to feel like you're missing out by opting for a green option. The Suri

2.0's slim design is lightweight and better suited for trips away than ever, thanks to a new travel lock and plant-based head cover. Meanwhile, its unreliable spring-pin charger has been replaced by a wireless version (both in the bundled case and stand), and its new pressure sensor vibrates three times and pauses the brush if you push too hard. All of this builds on what made the original so good: its eco-friendly credentials. The company has been working with ClimatePartner to offset 100% of its emissions (including transport and manufacturing), and it provides a postage-paid compostable bag to send the used heads back for recycling. These heads (three for £14.99, or cheaper on a subscription), incidentally, are comstarch, with the bristles made of castor oil. It's a shame that ... it's a little lacking in the power department, with its 33,000 BPM vibration frequency feeling noticeably less thorough than its rivals. If you have a toothbrush budget most people could only dream of, then the Philips Sonicare Smart 9400 is the one to go for. I also tested the DiamondClean 9900, which retails for more than twice the 9400's current price, but I actually prefer the way this one charges. Why we love it: When I took the Sonicare 9400 out of the box, I thought they'd packed the wrong

charger. It turns out that the handy rinse glass included in the package is how it charges. You rest the charging puck underneath it, and the toothbrush charges through the glass when not in use. What a time to be alive. With up to 62,000 motions a minute, it's the joint most powerful sonic brush I tested (tying with the aforementioned DiamondClean 9900), and you can really feel the results after use. It has four modes – clean (with three in-

ten- brushing habits. Unlike with the DiamondClean 9900, where it's the only way to cycle between modes, you don't have to use it. But if you do, you'll receive guidance on your brushing, showing the areas you've missed and giving you the option to spend a bit longer on them if needed. It can be connected with Apple Health for iPhone data nerds, and it'll even automatically reorder brush heads for you if you want, so you're never

can buy, as you can probably tell from the fact that Oral-B's iO line goes all the way up to the iO10. But because they all use the same motor and brush, and thus offer similar performance, this is the one I recommend: it jettisons unnecessary extras (like a connected app and screen) in order to simply deliver the features you need for a great clean. Why we love it: It boasts three modes – daily clean, sensitive and whiten – and its round heads are small enough to get into tight areas. Most importantly, its pressure sensor won't only tell you when you're applying too much pressure, but also when you're applying too little, via an easy-to-understand white/green/red lighting system in a ring at the top of the handle. While it has fewer modes than the higher-numbered iOs, it delivers the same dentist-fresh-feeling performance, while retailing for a fraction of their optimistic RRP's. It's a shame that ... at £15 for two, replacement heads are a touch on the pricey side. And, like all the Oral-B brushes I tested, it made me oddly dribbly during the brushing, so stay near the sink. It may look like something more at home on the shelves of Ann Summers, but the Foreo Issa 3 is doing something a bit different, which makes it ideal for those with extra sensitive gnashers, or those loth to give up their manual toothbrush.



sities), deep clean, gum health and white – feels comfortable in the hand, and comes with a charging case if you don't want to take the magical glass charger on the road. It also connects to a rather excellent app to track your

caught short. This oscillating toothbrush (which moves the bristles in a circular motion, rather than vibrating like most other brushes here – see the buying guide below for more information) isn't technically the best one you

## Boong is a nominee for Best Family and Children's Film



**Mumbai:** Manipuri-language movie A nominee for a BAFTA Award in the Best Children's and Family Film category is Boong, which is produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment. The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) released the nominations on Tuesday, January 27. Arco, Lilo & Stitch, and Zootropolis 2 are additional nominees in this category. In response to the nomination, Ritesh Sidhwani emphasized the film's emotional core and the significance of providing a platform for marginalized perspectives.

"Boong was made with a lot of heart by LP (Lakshmi-priya Devi), in a language and region that rarely finds space on global platforms," he stated in an interview. This BAFTA nomination is a beautiful acknowledgement of her sensitive and genuine storytelling, and it holds great significance. He complimented the entire crew behind the movie on Instagram, echoing the sentiment. "Boong was made with a lot of heart by @lp\_devi, in a language and region that rarely find space on global platforms," Sidhwani added. This BAFTA nomination is a beautiful acknowledgement of her delicate, genuine storytelling, and it holds great significance. Team Boong deserves congratulations. Supported by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Enter-

## Ramesh Sippy says, "Dharmendra Mixed Vodka In Coconut Water"



**Mumbai:** Actress Hema Malini and veteran director Ramesh Sippy have shared intriguing stories from the Sholay set, including how Dharmendra once walked almost 50 kilometers from his hotel to the shooting location and even mixed a little vodka with coconut water to get into the appropriate mood. The two recently attended the magazine cover unveiling honoring Sholay's 50th anniversary. "One day, Dharmendra decided that he wanted to walk all the way from the hotel to the shooting spot, which was almost 50 kilometers away," Ramesh Sippy exclusively told IANS, recalling the incident. He began walking around two or three in the morning, took short breaks, and kept going until he arrived at the destination at approximately seven. He was prepared to shoot when he emerged after an hour of recuperation. He was totally committed, even though it was unbelievable. "He would walk miles and miles," Hema Malini continued. "That

was one side of Dharmendra," Sippy added, highlighting the actor's playful side. His fun side was the other. Occasionally, a tiny wink and a small amount of vodka combined with coconut water might convey the message.

He was given a particular spirit by it. "There was a childlike innocence in him that came through very often, and within moments, he would turn into a strong, serious man," the director continued, describing Dharmendra's attitude. That was a very appealing quality.

He might become irate, but in a matter of seconds, he would be completely fine again." For those who don't know, Dharmendra played Veeru in the classic 1975 film Sholay. It went on to become one of the best films in Indian cinema and a cult classic. Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Hema Malini, Sanjeev Kumar, Amjad Khan, AK Hangal, and Sachin Pilgaonkar were among the actors that acted in the film alongside Dharmendra.

# How Arijit Singh became a generation's voice of sorrow

**Mumbai:** "For years, his songs were what you turned to when you were sad, can't even do that tonight," I jokingly said to a friend when Arijit Singh announced his retirement from playback singing on Tuesday night. Indeed, for a generation, Arijit was the voice of sadness. However, he was much more than that—a talented vocalist who, like few others before him, filled a hole in Bollywood. Fans were justified to be shocked by Arijit Singh's unexpected retirement announcement. One of the most well-known voices in Indian music, the 38-year-old has left a lasting impression on Bollywood and fans all over the world with a number of

chart-topping tunes. Arijit has gained recognition throughout the years for his soulful performances that demonstrate his versatility in a variety of genres. He has sang everything from energetic songs to devout ones, but romantic ballads were his specialty. With songs like Phir Mohabbat from Murder 2 (2012), Arijit started his musical career. That same year, he became well-known for Raabta from Agent Vinod.

However, his career was completely changed by a musical smash the next year. Arijit went on to produce a number of iconic songs that showcased his vocal range and emotional depth after the enormous success of Tum Hi Ho

from Aashiqui 2 (2013). He became the voice of the younger generation because to Aashiqui's songs. Arijit released a number of successes throughout the ensuing years, including a number of "heartbreak anthems." Agar Tum Saath Ho from Tamasha (2015) delicately examined the intricacies of relationships, while songs like Channa Mereya from Ae Dil Hai Mushkil (2016) depicted the agony of unrequited love.

The suffering was intensified by Hamari Adhuri Kahani. Nearly ten years ago, there was a meme on the internet that claimed Arijit's voice could even make you feel sorry for someone else's breakup. That demonstrated the strength of his voice and the success of his songs. Contrary to what the memes claim, Arijit sang more than only "sad songs."

He demonstrated his versatility and ability to skillfully blend deep melodies with broad appeal by being equally comfortable with romantic hits like Main Tenu Samjhawan Ki and Tujhe Kitna Chahne Lage as well as high-energy chartbusters like Nashe Si Chadh Gayi. The good news is that Arijit has made it clear that he will continue to create music. It's unclear what form it will take. However, his supporters can celebrate. The voice won't stop talking.



# Ibrahim Ali Khan is the most "besharam" in the film industry, according to Orry

**Mumbai:** In his long conflict with actor Sara Ali Khan and her family, content creator Orhan Awatramani, better known by his stage as Orry, is not giving up. Recently, the social media influencer rekindled the controversy by calling Ibrahim Ali Khan, Sara's brother, "the most besharam in the industry." When Orry joined Elvish Yadav for his podcast, he made headlines once more by making fun of Ibrahim. The same promotional video has appeared on social media and is gaining a lot of attention. Orry also discussed the origins of his friendship with Sara on the program. Orry responded, "Aisa nahi hai ke ek group chat hai Bollywood stars ki aur ek din unhone mujhe add kiya and aaj main sab log ke saath dost hai (It's not like there's a Bollywood



## Hrithik Roshan Gives Sunny Deol's Border 2 High Marks



**Mumbai:** Hrithik Roshan expressed his opinions about Border 2 on social media.

The movie, which debuted in theaters on January 23, has won plaudits from both critics and viewers. Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, and others make up the cast. "Loved Border 2," he posted on his Instagram Story. Every heart. Congratulations to the whole team. Alia Bhatt

also thanked the movie yesterday, mentioning her "dear friend" Varun in particular. In the movie, Varun portrays Major Hoshiyar Singh Dahiya. Varun sent a touching message about Border 2 on social media a few days prior. "I went to Chandan cinema and saw Border when I was just a kid in class four," he wrote. It had such a significant effect. We all felt a sense of patriotism in the hall, and I can still picture it. "I started to look up to our armed forces, and to this day, I salute how they protect us and keep us safe, whether on our borders or during natural calamities," he continued. Even now, one of my favorite films is J.P. Dutta Sir's War Epic. Being a part of JP Sir and Bhushan Kumar's Border 2 is a very special event in my career.

It's even more wonderful since I get to work alongside my hero, Sunny Paaji." Border 2 is a spiritual successor to Border, set against the backdrop of the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict.

stars' group chat and one day they added me)," when asked about his friendship with numerous Bollywood superstars.

Orry recalled how he and Sara became friends, saying, "People used to ask me a lot of questions about Sara on an app called AskFM." I messaged her on Facebook one day to let her know how many people were inquiring about her and that I was even responding. AskFM gained a lot of popularity. At that time, I hadn't even met Sara. We first met when she was in New York, and I was there too. A friend of ours had arranged a dinner, he fell asleep, but Sara came... We went and had dinner, and kept meeting again and again. Eventually, we became good friends." The conflict between Sara and Orry, who

were formerly close friends, has dominated social media for the past few days.

Orry has frequently made fun of Sara, even going so far as to make fun of Sara's career and the names of Palak Tiwari and Amrita Singh. Sara and her brother Ibrahim Ali Khan recently unfollowed Orry on Instagram, according to a number of social media users. Orry said, "Long ago, bro," when asked if he had unfollowed them as well.

They recently caught up. The tension was evident when Orry shared a video with the title "3 worst names," which many social media users took as a jab at Sara, her mother Amrita Singh, and actor Palak Tiwari, who is allegedly seeing Sara's brother Ibrahim Ali Khan.

# Ahan Shetty on the border scene that infuriated him as a kid

**Mumbai:** Ahan Shetty is enjoying Border 2's success. The movie is a stand-alone follow-up to the war classic Border, directed by JP Dutta in 1997. Suniel Shetty, Ahaan's father, played Bhairon Singh Rathore in the first film. The new movie, which is directed by Anurag Singh, features new actors like Varun Dhawan and Diljit Dosanjh along with the return of OG Sunny Deol. Mahendra Singh Rawat, an Indian Navy officer from the 14th Frigate Squadron, is portrayed by Ahaan. The actor recently had a conversation on his long-standing connection to the original Border while riding high on the success of the movie. When I first saw it, I was rather young. When I was four years old, I fully understood it. I then watched it on TV every year on Independence Day or Republic Day. Ahan Shetty remarked, "That movie has always held a special place in my heart." The actor also talked about how, as a boy, the famous tank scene from the first Border, in which Suniel Shetty's character is killed, infuriated him. "As a son, I feel a lot of anger and



pain because my father was martyred," he said. However, that sequence is really motivating for me as an actor. In my own writing, I aimed to be as honest and truthful as my father was in that scene. Ahan Shetty stated, "To be honest, it all feels very heavy, but in a good way," in reference to the reaction Border 2 has been getting. My heart is full. All the effort seems to have paid off when viewers relate to the movie and

make it their own. This is a victory for the entire team, not just for me. Each performer and technician has put out their best effort. "The punishment scenes in the first half of the film — with me, Diljit, and Varun," Ahan said, referring to the more humorous parts of the movie. We had no idea these would be so enjoyable while we were filming. After witnessing the audience's response, we comprehended.

However, other scenes have a considerably stronger emotional impact. "The moment with the letters has a powerful effect. Even though I knew what would happen in Diljit Sir's martyrdom scene, my eyes welled up as I watched it on TV. The actor added, "That moment is also very heavy when the entire cast comes forward with Teri Mitti playing." Prior to Border 2, Ahan made his Bollywood debut with the 2021 movie Tadap. Tara Sutaria appeared in the film, which was directed by Milan Luthria. Ahan Shetty experienced a challenging period between his debut and Border 2. "That stage wasn't simple. Due to a contract, I was unable to work, and it was COVID-19. It was a challenging period for me, but I wouldn't describe it as a battle. I feel like I've moved past that stage now," he said. Ahan Shetty has a full schedule for the future. "I signed three movies. There is a horror movie, one with Reliance, and one with Shaad Ali, sir. He said, "Filming will start in 2026, and the release will be in late 2026 or 2027."

## Long lines outside the restaurant owned by Shilpa Shetty



**Mumbai:** AmmaKai, the restaurant owned by actor Shilpa Shetty, became the talk of social media after announcing a complimentary breakfast on Republic Day, which attracted large numbers of patrons. Videos of the lengthy lines quickly went viral.

People were spotted waiting up hours before the store opened. Social media users commented on the culture of freebies and the public's perception of such programs as a result of the films, sparking a wider discussion. On January 26, the free breakfast offer at Shilpa Shetty's recently opened restaurant, AmmaKai, ignited a social media controversy that resulted in long lines outside the establishment. People lined

up as early as 7 am for the first-come, first-served program. Videos of the throng appeared on social media, which made many wonder about the increasing fixation with free things.

Opinions remained split as the footage circulated on social media. While some applauded the restaurant's gesture, others criticized what they called a "freebie mindset," pointing out that many people in the lines seemed to be well-off. AmmaKai is situated in Bandra, Mumbai. Shilpa Shetty and Ranjit Bindra introduced it in December 2025.

Home-style South Indian cuisine is served at this Bastian Hospitality restaurant. Bastian Bandra stood there till August of last year.

## President brings up the “G RAM G” Law, opposition sloganeering is heard in Parliament

**New Delhi, Jan 28:** During the president’s speech this morning during the parliament’s Budget Session, the opposition members voiced their opposition to the “VB-G RAM G” law, which is intended to replace the MGNREGA program.President Droupadi Murmu brought up the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Act, also known as the “VB-G RAM G” bill, in her traditional speech at the start of the Budget Session.”The Viksit Bharat-G RAM G law was created to promote employment and development in rural regions. In her speech, the president stated, “There will be 125 days of employment guarantees in villages with this new reform.” Members of the opposition created a commotion and demanded that the bill be repealed while NDA MPs pounded their tables in gratitude.The UPA government’s flagship MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act) is intended to be upgraded by the G Ram G law. Despite fierce opposition during the most recent session, it passed the legislature and received the president’s approval in December.Under the



MGNREGA, the government provided unemployment benefits in the event of unemployment and promised 100 days of work in rural areas. The ‘G RAM G’ statute maintains the other two regulations while increasing the 100-day guarantee to 125. The fact that employment under “G RAM G” is supposed to be created through a pre-approved plan, however, has garnered criticism. The change

in name from Mahatma Gandhi to “G Ram G” further infuriated the Congress, with some leaders claiming that the administration intended to erase the Father of the Nation’s name from history. The first portion of the budget session, which started today, will run through February 13. The second phase begins on March 9 and ends on April 2. On Sunday, the budget will be presented.

## “Leader of people”: PM Modi laments Ajit Pawar’s passing

**New Delhi, Jan 28:**The “untimely” death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who perished in an aircraft crash this morning, has “shocked” Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Around 8:45 a.m., an airplane transporting 66-year-old Ajit Pawar from Mumbai to his hometown of Baramati, Maharashtra, crashed, killing him. The collision also claimed the lives of four additional people.PM Modi described Ajit Pawar as a “leader of the people” with a solid grassroots connection in a post on X. He was well-known for being a diligent individual who led the way in helping the Maharashtra people. Notable were his zeal for helping the underprivileged and impoverished as well as his grasp of administrative issues. His sudden death is heartbreaking and frighten-

ing. To his family and many admirers, my condolences. PM Modi scribbled, “Om Shanti.” on X.Following the collision, the Learjet 45, which was operated by the private corporation VSR Ventures, caught fire.The plane crashed while attempting a second approach to Baramati Airport, according to the flight tracking website Flightradar24.Five people were on board, including Ajit Pawar, his PSO and attendant, and two crew members (the pilot in command and the first officer), according to a senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Prior to the local body elections, the top NCP leader was supposed to speak at four election rallies in Baramati.On July 22, 1959, Ajit Pawar was born in the village of Deolali Pravara in the Ahmednagar district



of Maharashtra. Anantrao Pawar, his father, was employed at Mumbai’s (then Bombay) famed Rajkamal Studios. His father’s passing ended his academic career. At the age of 23, he was elected to the board of a co-operative sugar plant. By

1982, his uncle Sharad Pawar was a well-known Congressman in the state. His two sons, Jay Pawar and Parth Pawar, and wife, Sunetra Pawar, the daughter of former Maharashtra minister Padamsinh Bajirao Patil, survive him.

## Five people including pilot Shambhavi Pathak died in a plane crash

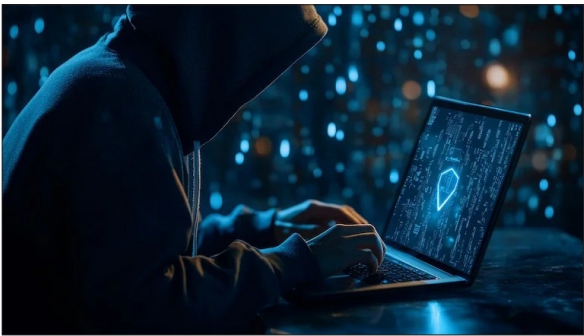
**New Delhi:** Five persons lost their lives in a jet crash this morning in Baramati, Pune, including Captain Shambhavi Pathak. Minutes before the planned landing, Pathak’s plane crashed while carrying Ajit Pawar, the deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, from Mumbai to Baramati. Pathak was the First Officer of VSR Ventures, a non-scheduled air transport company based in Delhi that operated the Learjet 45, a small aircraft that was involved in the mishap. Between 2016 and 2018, Pathak finished her secondary studies at Air Force Bal Bharati School. According to their LinkedIn profile, this was followed by training as a commercial pilot and flight crew at the New Zealand International Commercial Pilot Academy. She graduated from the University of Mumbai with a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics, Aviation, and Aerospace Science and Technology.She also obtained a Flight Instructor Rating (A) while working as an Assistant Flying Instructor at Madhya Pradesh Flying Club. Additionally, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) granted Pathak a Frozen Airline Transport Pilot License (ATPL). A crash claimed the lives of NCP Chief Pawar, his personal security guard, Vidip Jadhav, two pilots, Sumit Kapur and Sambhavi Pathak, and a flight attendant. Prior to the local body elections next month, Pawar was scheduled to attend four important meetings.The flight monitoring data indicates that Pawar’s plane departed Mumbai airport around 8:10 a.m. It crashed in a mountainous location close to Baramati around 35 minutes later.

## Behind the Rs 16-crore sophisticated fraud network are CA candidates and MBAs

**New Delhi, Jan 28:** The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) made significant progress against cybercrime by dismantling an interstate network that was behind high-value frauds totaling more than Rs 16 crore through investment scams and “digital arrest” scams. The fact that the operation was managed by educated professionals, such as business consultants, finance specialists, and aspiring CAs, rather than seasoned criminals, has shocked investigators.Six people who enabled these crimes through “digital arrests” and sophisticated investment schemes were apprehended by the agency on Tuesday after a concerted investigation throughout Kerala and Bengaluru.

The arrests are connected to three main incidents involving severe financial losses for Hyderabad residents, according to TGCSB Director Shikha Goel. A senior citizen woman was called by fraudsters posing as representatives of the TRAI, CBI, and RBI, saying that her Aadhaar-linked phone was used for illegal purposes. For days, she was subjected to “virtual custody” through video chats on Skype and WhatsApp, forced to violate her set deposits, and coerced with false legal documents.

Keralan businessman Renju Pathakku was detained for using his company’s bank account as a conduit for the pilfered money.In a different instance, a phony Blue Dart agent called a man on WhatsApp and claimed that a package in his name contained illicit goods. The victim was forced to keep complete confidentiality and send money over the course of two months for “verification” when phony Mumbai Police personnel “took over.” A third instance of trading fraud in Hyderabad involved the theft of Rs 3.40 crore. A “stock market professor” used the



promise of large IPO returns to get a businessman into a fraudulent trading platform. He invested Rs 3.40 crore in just 22 days after witnessing phony returns. When his withdrawal requests were denied, he became aware of the fraud. In Bengaluru, three directors and businessmen—V Jayaprakash, Balaraju, and Harish G—were detained for giving company bank accounts to foreign handlers.The TGCSB brought attention to an alarming pattern. A CA candidate, an MBA holder, and business consultants are among the educated professionals who have been caught in addition to career criminals. In return for commissions, these “agents” supplied mule accounts, enabling foreign syndicates—often based in Vietnam or Cambodia—to quickly drain money out of India.No Indian law enforcement agency will ever arrest you over a video conversation or demand money to clear your record, according to TGCSB, which emphasizes that “digital arrest” is a complete fantasy.

## India’s expected starting lineup for the 4th Twenty20 International against New Zealand



**New Delhi:** On Wednesday, India will play their fourth Twenty20 International match against New Zealand in an attempt to maintain their winning streak in

the series. Abhishek Sharma has been the standout player for the Suryakumar Yadav-led team, which has won all three of the five-match series thus far.

Jasprit Bumrah limited the visitors to 153/9 in 20 overs in their most recent match by taking three wickets. Abhishek Sharma responded in spectacular form, hitting an undefeated 68 off only 22 deliveries. As India won by eight wickets, captain Suryakumar Yadav, who also struck a fast half-century, provided him with excellent support. Sanju Samson, who hasn’t done well in this series thus far, will be the focus of attention, but Abhishek will be hoping to maintain his outstanding run of form. Ishan Kishan is anticipated to bat at number three, but if they choose to give the wicketkeeper batsman some respite, Shreyas Iyer may also be able to earn a slot.

Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, and Rinku Singh make up a strong quartet in the middle order. The team management will be hoping to the top hitters to score some runs to improve their confidence before the 2026 T20 World Cup.

It is anticipated that Axar Patel, who injured his finger during the first Twenty20 International, will rejoin the team and most likely take Kuldeep Yadav’s place.

But with Varun Chakravarthy getting some break before the World Cup, Ravi Bishnoi is probably going to stay in the team.Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah are anticipated to participate in the pace department, while Harshit Rana will not.

## Jose Mourinho Compares Alvaro Arbeloa of Real Madrid to One of His “Children”



**New Delhi:** Before their Champions League match on Wednesday, Real Madrid’s Alvaro Arbeloa was compared to a toddler by Benfica’s coach, Jose Mourinho. During his tenure as Los Blancos’ manager from 2010 to 2013, the seasoned Portuguese coach enjoyed a close bond with Arbeloa in a fractured dressing room. Mourinho said he would never want to make things difficult for his previous boss after his remark last week about being “surprised” when rookie managers head important European clubs was interpreted

as a jab at new Madrid coach Arbeloa. In Italy, former Inter Milan coach Mourinho claimed that his remarks were interpreted as criticism of Cristian Chivu’s summer transfer to the Serie A team.Mourinho stated at a press conference on Tuesday, “There is one problem -- both Chivu and Arbeloa are my children, they are not just ex-players of mine, but they are special.”Regarding Alvaro, I would say that he is one of the players; in terms of humanity, empathy, and personal perspective, he is among my favorites.“Obviously he is not the best player who has played for Real Madrid, but he is certainly one of the best men who has played for me at Real Madrid.” Mourinho’s remarks could not be interpreted as an insult because he stated that he was taken aback when he was given the opportunity to head Benfica at the start of his coaching career in 2000.“The last thing I would do would be to put pressure on him,” the 63-year-old said. “I want everything to go well for him, and for him to have a fantastic career as a coach.”

## Novak Djokovic enters the Australian Open semifinals

**New Delhi:** After Lorenzo Musetti was forced to withdraw after their quarterfinal match on Wednesday, Novak Djokovic advanced to his 13th semi-final in Melbourne in an absolutely incredible turn of events at the Australian Open 2026. Leading the match 6-4, 6-3, and appearing to be on the verge of a historic upset by outplaying the ten-time champion, Musetti had been putting on a masterclass. But in the third set, the 23-year-old Italian succumbed to the physical strain of the competition.

He was unable to continue while behind 1-3 in the third after a medical stoppage due to a thigh and groin injury, giving a relieved Djokovic the victory. For the 38-year-old Serb, who has advanced to the final four thanks to two straight retirements, this outcome is an incredible stroke of luck. Djokovic hasn’t played much this week after Jakub Mensii gave him a complete walkover in the fourth round, which might be crucial considering his own difficulties.

Despite his unusual path, Djokovic is now two victories away from an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam championship, awaiting the outcome of the thrilling quarterfinal match between Ben Shelton and Jannik Sinner.

## The best players in Pakistan band together to oppose Mohsin Naqvi’s threat to pull out of the T20 World Cup

**New Delhi:** By openly endorsing Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup venue dispute with the International Cricket Council (ICC), the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has jeopardized its cricketing future. Mohsin Naqvi, the head of the PCB, has even gone so far as to cast doubt on Pakistan’s ability to compete in the competition. Following a recent meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Naqvi disclosed that his team’s T20 World Cup participation is currently on “hold,” with a final decision to be made either this Friday or Monday of next week. Pakistan’s approach has begun to face criticism from its own cricketing community as the event draws near, with administrators and former players advising Naqvi against going too far.While previous PCB Chairman Khalid Mahmood and secretary Arif Ali Abbasi saw no reason for not sending the



team to the World Cup, former Pakistan Test captain Muhammad Hafeez believed that the PCB should send the Pakistani side.“I can understand Pakistan supporting Bangladesh, but

what purpose will PCB achieve by not sending its team apart from spoiling relations with the International Cricket Council and member boards,” Abbasi stated.Abbasi, who served on the board under the leadership of IS Bindra and Jagmohan Dalmiya, stated that the PCB needs to send the squad to the World Cup. “How do we relate to Sri Lanka? Since all of our games, including those against India, take place in Sri Lanka, it is obvious that Sri Lanka will lose if Pakistan does not travel,” he stated.According to Mahmood, the PCB’s position is commendable, but it must continue to be reasonable and focused on supporting Pakistani cricket.“We must keep in mind that no other cricket board, with the exception of Pakistan, agreed with Bangladesh’s request to relocate matches from India. Mahmood stated, “I can understand the Bangladesh board’s position, but it is also a fact

that no one supported them in the ICC meeting.” Mohsin Khan, a former chief selector, head coach, and Test batsman, also encouraged the PCB to send the team to the World Cup. “We have issues with India, but we are playing all our matches in Sri Lanka.”

Additionally, he mentioned that he had read that the Bangladesh Board would neither contest or appeal the ICC’s decision to exclude them from the World Cup.”So, why won’t the PCB send a team to the World Cup? “It will be detrimental to our cricket,” he said.Former captains Muhammad Yousuf and Inzamam ul Haq said that Pakistan must consider all factors before reaching a final decision. “In my opinion, Pakistan should participate in the World Cup. “Our cricket team needs to perform well in major events, and we have some good players,” Inzamam stated.

## Rohtak Royals eye strong comeback

**Sonipat:** Rohtak Royals will be aiming to bounce back strongly when they face Faridabad Fighters in their second fixture of the inaugural Kabaddi Champions League (KCL) on January 28. After a hard-fought outing in their tournament opener, the Royals are determined to regroup, refine their strategy, and register their first win of the season, according to a release. Despite falling short by just two points in their opening game, the Royals showed signs of promise and resilience, with both the defence and raiding units producing moments of cohesion. With valuable match experience now under their belt, the team will look to convert those positives into a more clinical performance against the Fighters, understanding importance of momentum acontest. The Italian had three break points to race 5-2 ahead, but the veteran somehow fought back through an eight-minute game to hold on. But it was just delaying the inevitable and Musetti took the set in 54 minutes, then broke again to open set two. Djokovic was not done yet, breaking back, but then threw it away again with time.

## Extremely lucky' Djokovic advances to Melbourne semi-finals after Musetti's sudden retirement

**Musetti retires injured after leading Djokovic two sets**

**Melbourne:** An "extremely lucky" Novak Djokovic survived a massive scare to reach the Australian Open semi-finals on Wednesday when Lorenzo Musetti retired hurt while two sets up, keeping alive the Serbian great's bid for a 25th Grand Slam crown. The fifth-seeded Italian was well on top and leading 6-4, 6-3, 1-3 when he withdrew after treatment on his upper right leg, with his movement badly impeded. It was a huge stroke of luck for the error-riddled 10-time Melbourne winner Djokovic, who will now play either defending champion Jannik Sinner or American eighth seed Ben Shelton for a place in the final. The let-off kept alive his bid to secure a record 25th major title.

Djokovic has been trying to move past Margaret Court and clinch the landmark since his last one at the US Open in 2023. It has proved increasingly difficult with The emergence of Sinner And Carlos Alcaraz. I feel really sorry for him, he was the far better player, I was on my way home tonight," said Djokovic. It has happened to me a few times. He was in



full control. So unfortunately, I don't what else to say. He should have been the winner today no doubt. I am extremely lucky to get through this one today." With victory, Djokovic claimed sole ownership of most singles wins at Melbourne Park, surpassing Roger Federer with his 103rd. It also put him into a 54th Slam semi-final to extend his own record. But it looked to all be over for the 38-year-old. He was his own worst enemy with an extraordinarily high unforced error rate, racking up 18 in the first set alone and 32 overall before Musetti walked away.

Djokovic comfortably held serve then worked three break points to start. A nervy Musetti saved two of them but a misjudged forehand put him 2-0 behind. The Ital-

ian though quickly settled and a slew of poor shots by the Serb opened the door to a break back in the next game. It was the first of four games in a row won by Musetti, whose court coverage was sublime as Djokovic piled up mistakes off both his backhand and forehand. The Italian had three break points to race 5-2 ahead, but the veteran somehow fought back through an eight-minute game to hold on. But it was just delaying the inevitable and Musetti took the set in 54 minutes, then broke again to open set two. Djokovic was not done yet, breaking back, but then threw it away again with yet more errors to concede serve for a fourth time. He was broken once more when serving to stay in the set, with Musetti unleashing a sensational fore-

hand down the line to move two sets clear. But Musetti needed treatment on a thigh issue after falling 2-1 down in the third and was clearly hurting, with his movement restricted. He tried to carry on, but had no choice but to throw in the towel. With victory, Djokovic claimed sole ownership of most singles wins at Melbourne Park, surpassing Roger Federer with his 103rd. back through an Eight-minute on. It was the first of four games in a row won by Musetti, whose court coverage was sublime as Djokovic piled up mistakes off both his backhand and forehand. The Italian had three break points to race 5-2 ahead, but the veteran somehow fought back through an eight-minute game to hold on. But it was just delaying the inevitable and Musetti took the set in 54 minutes, then broke again to open set two.

Djokovic was not done yet, breaking back, but then threw it away again with yet more errors to concede serve for a fourth time. He was broken once more when serving to stay in the set, with Musetti unleashing a line to move two sets clear.

## Former India star praises Abhishek Sharma, compares with Chris Gayle



**New Delhi:** Former India batter Mohammed Kaif has showered praise on Abhishek Sharma, with the in-form India opener now being spoken of in the same breath as T20 great Chris Gayle. Kaif's remarks came after Abhishek's brutal assault on New Zealand in the third T20I, an innings that has reignited debate around where the young left-hander stands among elite power-hitters. Abhishek has enjoyed a sensational run in the ongoing T20I series, emerging as the second-highest run-scorer with 152 runs from three matches. Averaging 76.00 at a staggering strike rate of 271.43, the numbers reflect not just form but a fearless approach that has allowed him to dominate bowlers from the very first over. Speaking on his YouTube channel after the third T20I, Kaif explained why Abhishek's method makes him different from most aggressive openers. "Usually, players who play like him are not consistent. I've seen many big-name players like this. Chris Gayle, who Used to play in a similar way, always going

for the big shots," Kaif said. "But even Chris Gayle played smart cricket. Gayle also used to play maiden overs. He would play the first over carefully, especially on pitches like Bangalore where there was early help, and then accelerate."According to Kaif, Abhishek has taken that template a step further. Abhishek Sharma has surpassed that. He doesn't need to settle his eyes, he attacks straight away. So you can't praise him enough," Kaif said. Batters like this are usually inconsistent. One good innings, then a few failures. But look at Abhishek's style. He proves himself in every match. Even if he faces just 12-14 balls, he scores 60-70 runs. That makes him a match-winner. If Abhishek Sharma is on, India are almost certain to win. Kaif's assessment followed Abhishek's stunning performance in the third T20I, where India were chasing 155 to lock up an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series. Showing no signs of caution, the left-hander Raced to a Half-century in 14 balls, missing.

## The return of Ravi Bishnoi: How tweaked action helped spinner return to his best

**New Delhi:** Leg spinner Ravi Bishnoi made a tremendous comeback in international cricket right ahead of the T20 World Cup. Once ranked world No. 1 in the T20I format, Bishnoi had a massive dip in form in the 2025-26 season, where he not only lost his place in the Indian team but also got whacked in the Indian Premier League. Speaking after Bishnoi's heroics in the third T20I of the series, his coach Shahrukh admitted that a lot of work had gone into helping the bowler find his rhythm. In an interview with The Indian Express, Shahrukh explained that Bishnoi had completely missed his lengths last season. "When he came to us, he wanted to make a few tweaks and also work a lot on his batting. He was very determined. For a few weeks, he was working



like any young kid in the academy who wanted to learn as much as he could," Shahrukh said in the interview. Usually known for his exceptional wicket-taking and defensive abilities, Bishnoi picked up just nine wickets from 11 matches in IPL 2025. The coach revealed that they had spotted Bishnoi's issues early, where the spinner was running straight into his run-up instead of his usual style of coming in from wide of the wicket. This in turn affected other parts of

his biomechanics, resulting in a multitude of problems. At the point of release, his non-bowling arm had become too straight and he was releasing the ball at an angle of 11 o'clock as against the usual 1 o'clock that is common among leg spinners, and he wasn't using the crease," Shahrukh explained. Determined to return to his best, Bishnoi began starting his day at 5 a.m. He trained twice a day, four hours each, with a mix of red and white ball. Shahrukh said that

these mistakes and dips in form were common among cricketers, as a busy schedule meant that they themselves did not get a lot of time to sit down and dissect their mistakes. Pradyot Singh Rathore, one of Bishnoi's coaches in this process, said that they wanted the leg spinner to be a different player from what he was before. Instead of going back to the same type of bowler, they wanted Bishnoi to add to his arsenal while fixing his previous issues. "At the academy, all that he did was bowl a lot of overs. He wanted to be a different bowler when he got back again to the Indian team. I would say it is a new, improved version of Ravi. In those months, he has come of age," Pradyot said. The effort put in during the off-season started reflecting in domestic.

## Tottenham Hotspur and France striker Randal Kolo Muani suffers injuries in serious car crash

**Kolo Muani safe, available after minor accident**

**New Delhi:** Tottenham Hotspur and France forward Randal Kolo Muani was involved in a minor car accident on Tuesday while travelling for the club's Champions League fixture in Germany. Spurs head coach Thomas Frank has since confirmed the striker is "fine" and expected to be available for selection. The incident occurred as Kolo Muani and teammate Wilson Odobert were on their way to the airport ahead of Wednesday's final Champions League group-stage match against Eintracht Frankfurt. Speaking at his pre-match press conference, Frank played down the situation, explaining that it was a minor issue caused by a tyre problem and that everyone involved was safe. Tottenham Hotspur and France forward Randal Kolo Muani was involved in a minor car accident on Tuesday while travelling for the club's Champions League fixture in Germany. Spurs head coach Thomas Frank has since confirmed the striker is "fine" and expected to be available for selection. The incident occurred as Kolo Muani and teammate Wilson Odobert were on their way to the airport ahead of Wednesday's final



Champions League group-stage match against Eintracht Frankfurt. Speaking at his pre-match press conference, Frank played down the situation, explaining that it was a minor issue caused by a tyre problem and that everyone involved was safe. "It was a tyre blowing, so they are a little delayed, but they will land later tonight. I actually doubt they were both in the same car, but they were together."

Frank added that he had not yet spoken directly to the players but had received positive updates. I haven't spoken to them personally yet as the initial message is that they are doing well. They will fly out later, and I fully expect them both to be available tomorrow," he said. Pictures circulating on social media showed Kolo Muani standing beside a damaged Ferrari alongside Odobert. Tottenham later clarified that Odobert was travelling in his own car and had stopped to help his teammate after the incident. Kolo Muani, who is currently on loan from Paris Saint-Germain, has been a key contributor in Europe this season, scoring twice and providing two assists.

## Jindal Bedla extends winning streak, defeats Chandna Polo 9.5-5 in thrilling KogniVera Cup



**Jaipur:** In a thrilling clash at the KogniVera Cup 2026 in Jaipur, Jindal Bedla secured a brilliant 9.5-5 victory against Chandna Polo to extend their winning streak in the current season. Notably, Jindal Bedla began the game with a 0.5-point advantage under the handicap rule, according to a release. The initial chucker was fast-paced as both teams tried to breach each other's defences. However, Jindal Bedla soon settled into their rhythm with excellent displays from Siddhant Sharma and Rao Himmat Singh Bedla.

By the end of the second chukker, Jindal Bedla had taken a substantial lead. This was courtesy of three consecutive goals from Siddhant Sharma, who increased his side's lead by 3.5 with the score reading 6.5-3 at the end of the second chukker. In the final chukker, Jindal Bedla sealed the deal with two more goals, courtesy Siddhant Sharma yet again and ensured there was no room for a late upset. Overall, Siddhant

Sharma netted six goals in the match, while Rao Himmat Singh Bedla scored twice. Simran Shergill also contributed to the team's win by scoring a goal. The victory comes fresh off Jindal Bedla's recent win at the Rajmata Gayatri Devi Memorial Cup, further proving that they are the team to beat in the Jaipur polo circuit this season as they currently aim for the historic seven-foot KogniVera trophy. At the Rajmata Gayatri Devi Memorial Cup, Jindal Bedla managed to hold off a fierce comeback from the Optimus Achievers to cross the finishing line as Siddhant Sharma smashed three goals, while Rao Himmat Singh Bedla scored twice. Also, Phil Seller scored a goal to help the team's cause. The league stage of the Rajmata Gayatri Devi Memorial Cup (06 Goals) turned up the heat at the PPC Ground on Thursday as Jindal Bedla, riding high after their first win, faced off against RPC/Thunderbolt with their sights set on a spot in the knockouts. RPC/Thunderbolt started with a 2.5-goal advantage due to the handicap rule, but that didn't slow Jindal Bedla down at all. Led by Venkatesh Jindal and Rao Himmat Singh Bedla, the team put on a show, pushing forward with sharp, relentless attacks and flipping the match in their favour, according to a release. The match had

it all - standout solo moments and real teamwork. Siddhant Sharma owned the day, putting away 5 goals - including the very first just 30 seconds after the whistle, and also the last one to wrap things up. Phill Seller kept the pressure on through the middle chukkers, adding 4 more.

Venkatesh Jindal and Rao Himmat Singh Bedla didn't miss their chances either, each scoring twice to help the team's cause. When the dust settled, the scoreboard told the story: Jindal Bedla registered an emphatic 13-3.5 victory, which helped them book their berth in the semi-finals of the tournament, scheduled for this Saturday. Meanwhile, Rao Himmat Singh Bedla, the team's co-patron, was all smiles after the win, and he stated, "It was good fun; the grounds are playing so well. The other team wasn't as well-balanced as us, but it was great to get out there, run the horses, and find our rhythm together. It's always a pleasure to play as Jindal Bedla, and I'm very happy with how we are coming together ahead of the semi-finals." Venkatesh Jindal also shared his thoughts, highlighting the team's chemistry. "The collaboration between Jindal and Bedla has been excellent. We are focusing on playing as a cohesive unit, and today's result shows that the hard work is paying off."

## Australian Open: Rybakina shocks World No 2 Swiatek, advances confidently into semi-finals

**Melbourne:** Elena Rybakina has made it to the Australian Open semifinals for the first time since her 2023 final appearance, stunning No. 2 seed Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-1 in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. Fifth seed Rybakina pulled away in the 1-hour and 35-minute match, winning eight of the last nine games, and levelled her record against Swiatek to 6-6 in the process, as per the WTA Tour website. Rybakina has been on fire, racking up her 18th win in 19 matches since last October, with her latest triumph over Swiatek marking her eighth straight win over a Top 10 player. Rybakina will now face either Jessica Pegula or Amanda Anisimova in the final fours.

I'm really pleased with the win. We know each other pretty well, and I was just trying to stay aggressive. In the first set, the first serve wasn't working for both of us, so we were trying to step in on the second serve and put pressure on each other.



In the second set, I just started to play more free, serve better, and I'm really happy with the win," Rybakina said after her match. "Really happy with the last two matches. It's a bit challenging with the sun, but I'm finding a way. For now, the serve is really helping, so hopefully I can continue like this," she added. Earlier, Rybakina was at her best after she thrashed 21st seed Elise Mertens to secure a coveted berth in the quarterfinals. Rybaki-

na displayed an aggressive performance, clinching the game 6-1 and 6-3 on Margaret Court Arena. World No. 2 Iga Swiatek, World No. 4 Amanda Anisimova, World No. 5 Elena Rybakina and World No. 6 Jessica Pegula have qualified for the women's singles quarterfinals of the Australian Open 2025 tournament on Monday. Iga Swiatek raced into the Australian Open quarterfinals after she beat home favourite Maddison Inglis in a

one-sided match 6-0, 6-3. Swiatek, a six-time Grand Slam champion, has also won the French Open four times and Wimbledon and the US Open once each.

However, Iga has never won the Australian Open, with her best result being semi-final runs in 2022 and 2025. The Polish superstar is now just three wins away from completing a career grand slam. Amanda Anisimov secured a comprehensive win her opponent.